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and

Adventure

NOVEMBER

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splendid two-part
story of Canada—

"THE POSTS OF PILLAGE"

A complete novel
by
J. ALLAN DUNN

"THE GOLD LUST"

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The GOLD LUST

A COMPLETE NOVEL

by J. ALLAN DUNN

Author of "The Greenstone Mask," "The Island of the Dead," etc.

CHAPTER I

BURIED TREASURE

Lust of Woman and Lust of Life,
Lust of Travel and Lust of Strife;
Never a one has the grip to hold
And the power to curse—like Lust of Gold.

"THREE quarters of a million dollars in gold. Ye gods! Did I understand you to ask me what I'd do with it?"

The speaker, Jim Winton, once successful man of leisure, now, by a spin of Fortune's wheel, a tardily equipped and struggling ~~architect~~, came from the long tables where he had been working under the north-light windows of his studio and faced his friend.

"I'll tell you what I'd do with it," he went on with mock earnestness, a twinkle in his brown eyes. "I'd pile every blueprint, tracing, plan and specification in the middle of the floor, warn Peggy and Selim, put the cat in safety, mail my insurance policy to the owner and set fire to the studio.

"If you ask me what I'd do *for* three quarters of a million I can tell you that also without hesitation: Commit with cheerfulness every crime on the calendar. But I don't believe there is that amount of loose coin in the world."

"I didn't say coin," said Archer Addams. "This is gold-dust and nuggets, at sixteen dollars to the ounce, twelve ounces to the pound, Troy weight, say close to two tons of the precious metal."

He stood by the fireplace in the light of the hickory logs, glowing brilliantly in the big studio, dusky with the shadows of the late Wintry afternoon, a brave figure of a man, well over six feet, lithe and alert, weather-bronzed despite the bleach of Winter, a trifle over thirty at a guess, scaling

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close to a hundred and ninety at another.

He possessed a quality of vibration, a plus of vigor beyond the average that was communicative, seeming to charge the atmosphere with magnetic energy and a sense of conviction. His quiet mention of a sum to which his listeners had been strangers—even in hope—for many a day, seemed matter-of-fact. Somehow one would not have been surprised to hear a second announcement that the gold was outside, waiting to be signed for. Even Jim Winton, the flippant, was impressed. Yet, to the general world, Addams was a failure. To himself, he was a man with a bad start who would yet challenge the leaders in the stretch.

He turned to the third occupant of the studio, Jim Winton's sister, who had risen at Addams's entrance a few minutes previously and cuddled down again among the cushions of a long-used, much-abused, but hospitable Morris chair.

"Well, Peggy?" he asked. "You purry, comfy thing, what would you do with it?"

She raised her head, the firelight on her rounded throat deepening the natural carmine of her cheeks, heightening the red-gold of her hair to match the curling flames.

"The answer's easy, fairy godfather," she mocked. "Get your wand ready. I've been fire-dreaming for an hour while Jim has been finishing up those plans he's working on. I was a thousand miles away when you arrived. What would I do? I'd clamber out of this rut we are all in and I'd start in whichever direction my nose pointed."

"Then you'd arrive in Heaven before your time, sister mine," broke in her brother.

Peggy made a face at him that was more of a reward than a punishment, and, the suggestion that her perfectly well-chiseled little nose was tip-tilted being largely a fraternal fallacy, went on placidly.

"I'd start and I'd keep going till I'd seen everything there was to be seen, and I'd get hold of dad and mother and—but don't get me going. It's your turn to answer foolish questions. Archer Addams, what would *you* do with three-quarters of a million dollars?"

"It's really only a quarter of a million, Peggy," he replied. "It has to be split three ways."

"Only a quarter?" exclaimed Winton in a voice of exaggerated interest. "Then I refuse to play any more. I'm going to finish this job, which represents one hundred and twenty-five dollars in real money."

He went back to his tables, and Addams, looking down at the girl, answered her question.

"I know what I'm going to do with mine," he said. "I worked that out coming down here. My law library of thirty-odd volumes, more or less in repair, my desk and two chairs, my typewriter, my one near-Persian rug, well worn by bill-collectors and book-agents, I am going to turn over to a young chap I know who is trying to 'get by' with a pine table and one chair, first endeavoring to persuade him to give up the law and learn barbering or something definitely lucrative. Then I am going to get the gold, buy one of Jim's very best plans, build me a house and marry the girl I'm in love with."

"And settle down as a country gentleman. That sounds nice and sensible," she said.

"No, not settle down. The girl wants to travel."

IT MIGHT have been a sudden leaping of the flames, but Addams fancied the flush on the girl's face deepened as he spoke. He hoped so. She sprang to her feet.

"Stop work, Jim," she ordered. "Sit down, Archer. I'm going to make tea. Then you, sir, can explain what you mean by coming into our humble studio and talking about quarters of millions as if you had brought in a bag of oranges for general distribution."

She busied herself with the tea-things while her brother gathered his papers together and Addams lit a shaded lamp.

They were good friends, these three, chums of all the years from childhood. The two men, college mates, were about the same age, thirty; the girl seven years younger than her brother. A few years before, their fortunes had been lost in the failure of a common speculation, a catastrophe that had set the boys to a hasty attempt at developing their capabilities for business. Peggy kept house for her brother who struggled with the task of designing ten-thousand-dollar bungalows for five-thousand-dollar clients. Archer Addams studied law for the benefit of clients as yet conspicuous by their absence.

The news of failure had found Addams cruising in the Caribbean on his sixty-foot sloop, Winton in England looking over prospective polo ponies for his string, and Peggy as a popular débutante of one season. The elder Addams, his wife already dead, soon followed her, crushed not so much by his own misfortunes as the knowledge that reliance on his judgment had led others, his friend Winton among them, into practical insolvency. Winton Senior and Mrs. Winton had retired upon a tiny competency to a small holding in the Berkshire Hills, while Jim, with Peggy as his housekeeper, set out upon a belated attempt to woo Fortune by designing tasteful dwellings for those who desired only show, and Addams set up his law office.

All three had faced the issue with laughs which had persisted in the face of persistent lack of success. Addams was a frequent visitor at the studio. To former liking had been added mutual respect. Friendship had stood the test. With Addams, towards Peggy it had ripened into something deeper that he rigorously imprisoned in a very secret chamber of his heart.

They had all gaily avoided the pertinacity of "old days' " friendship with their offers of help or pretense that nothing had happened; but Addams, recognizing Peggy's vital charm of beauty and vivacity, almost deluded himself into hoping that some man, more in favor with Fortune than he, would restore her to the status she had promised so well to adorn. But these things in the false pride of poverty he barely discussed with himself, even in his most intimate moments of privacy.

But, at last, when it seemed that, square his broad shoulders and smile as he might, he was doomed to drudgery and denial, Fortune had at least shown a disposition to flirt.

"Now Archer," said Peggy, when they were all cozily disposed about the little fire and she had played her part as dispenser of things to eat and drink, "on with the tale. There's been an air of secrecy and general puff-uppiness about you, ever since you arrived.

She cocked a merry thumb and forefinger at him.

"Stand and deliver, sir!" she ordered. "Or you may sit, if you prefer it, but deliver you must."

"Well," said Addams. "It's a long story, but I'm going to tell you the preface, and if you have no objection I'll let the man who made the story finish it. You remember the old chap I found in Union Square one night, half frozen, half starved, half conscious, with a policeman playing the nightstick rally on his poor old feet?"

"The one you say looks like Walt Whitman, and Jim calls your pirate?" asked the girl.

"He is a pirate," asserted her brother. "I met Archer mooning with him in Battery Park one day, and the old boy looked like Captain Kidd trying to masquerade as Santa Claus."

Addams set down his teacup.

"Well, you're not so far wrong after all, Jim," he said. "He was a pirate, once."

The girl clapped her hands.

"A real pirate!" she exclaimed. "Oh, go on, Archer! I can see John Silver and Blackbeard and Sir Harry Morgan standing in the dark corners."

She looked around the studio with a delicious little shiver, half real, half assumed.

"He won't measure up with those worthies," said Addams. "He never murdered any one, though he was in the middle of a lot of it. He was grateful to me for what little I did for him."

Jim grunted, knowing a soft side to his friend's character.

"And after a while I got interested in him. That started by my looking him up in his cubby-hole of a room in a dismal little court off Macdougal Street, a dingy place enough but clean and shipshape as he could keep it. When he got better I used to meet him afternoons at the aquarium, when I'd got tired of playing at being a lawyer to nobody except cranks with imaginary grievances.

"We'd sit up in the gallery and watch the fish, and he'd tell me long yarns about schools of them, little bits of living rainbows, swimming over beds of live coral set with jeweled anemones and gaudy seaweeds, as he had seen them in the South Seas.

"He seemed perpetually and fearfully on the lookout for some one, but for a long time he did not tell his secret. This morning he tramped down-town to my office and unburdened himself."

"The treasure?" asked the girl, her eyes alight."

"Yes. Seven hundred and fifty thousand

dollars' worth of dust and nuggets, at sixteen dollars to the ounce and twelve ounces to the pound, Troy weight, close to two tons of virgin gold—taken from the riverbeds of California sixty-five years ago, buried, and waiting for some one to dig it up and put it into circulation!"

"Has he handed you the usual bunk, Archer?" asked Jim with lazy sarcasm. "A sunken galleon full of tarnished gold, a map, skulls and crossbones, and a dying curse?"

Archer flushed.

"I'll admit the average buried treasure stunt is more or less of a joke," he said, "and usually ends in a fizzle. But I think you'll admit I'm not over gullible, and he tells a story this afternoon of a treasure, tarnished by a curse, that seems to me to hold the elements at least of truth."

"I suppose," he went on, "it's different, this matter of treasure-trove, when one is personally interested. But you shall hear the story as it was told to me by this old man of eighty-five, sane and clear-headed, from his own lips, and judge for yourselves."

"But I don't see where Peggy and I come in on it, Archer?" said Jim Winton. "He's *your* pirate!"

Then he shrugged his shoulders, admitting his interest in the tale, looking a little like a boy discovered stealing jam.

"Haven't we all been pals before and since our respective fathers went up in the same smash? And wasn't the entire unfortunate speculation made on the advice of my poor old *pater?*" asked Archer. "This is another speculation to be entered into on the advice of his son, with at least nothing to lose and a chance of recouping heavily. Of course we share alike. Jim, you're ridiculous."

"I understand, Archer," said the girl softly.

"Thanks, Peggy," he said. "I'm sure you do. So does Jim, really. Then it's all right if I bring the old boy 'round about eight o'clock?"

"Sure! We've nothing doing," answered Jim. "But honestly, Archer, didn't your pirate dream it? Do you really mean there's a chance of our putting hands on a real chunk of coin? It sounds too good to be true. If you knew how sick I am of this eternal grind of turning out cheap bungalows and punk garages——"

"Me too, Jim," answered Addams. "The practise of the law, what little I get of it, is neither attractive or lucrative. But I honestly believe this is true and that the money's there for the finding. We may have to fight for it, though."

Winton took his hands from his pockets and stood up.

"Fight! Why didn't you say so, long ago. That sounds more reasonable and interesting at the same time. You must admit that to quietly walk in on us and start talking about three-quarters of a million dollars as if it were thirty cents was somewhat staggering?"

"Well, we'll see," said Addams. "I've got to go now. No, I can't stay to dinner, Peggy, thank you. I've got to get some charts and things together that I left at the office. I'll have dinner downtown somewhere, but I'll be here at eight o'clock with the pirate."

CHAPTER II

THE GOLD PIRATES

THE knocking at the back door continued vigorously as Jim Winton tugged at the tardy bolts.

"Bring a light, will you, Peggy?" he called. "It's black as ink in the passage."

Peggy Winton appeared at the door of the studio. The apartment ran the full length of the building from Washington Square to an alley used partly as mews, partly for converted studios by the painters, sculptors and artists who had made that quarter of New York their own. The door at which Winton was struggling was a private one practically unused in favor of the entrance from the square.

"Here's the electric torch, Jim," said the girl, directing its beam on the stubborn door which opened suddenly as the last screeching bolt reluctantly left its socket.

A rush of Wintry night air brought with it a few flakes of snow, and Archer Addams appeared, steadying the arm of an old man, muffled in an ulster that fell from beneath his long white beard to his feet.

The ray of the torch fell full upon the aged face, vigorous yet in spite of the telltale traces of years. The cheeks, tanned long since to leather, held a glow where the blood still ran rather than crawled through the veins. The gray eyes beneath the hoary penthouse brows were clear though in the strong circle of light they seemed to hold something of alarm as their owner glanced across his shoulder into the bleak, snow-set mews, before he tramped, sturdily enough, across the threshold.

"Easy as we go," he said in a deep, rumbling voice. "A bit of that light for the feet, miss. Thank'ee."

Addams shut and bolted the door and Peggy led the old man into the studio to a big chair in front of the fire. On a little table beside it were pipes, a tobacco-jar, a box of cigars, a brass kettle above a spirit lamp and the materials for the brewing of hot toddy.

The stranger surveyed the table with eloquent eyes while the girl applied a match to the lamp beneath the kettle, as Addams entered the studio.

"Why the back door, Archer?" queried Jim Winton.

"We had a fancy we were followed. We took a taxicab from Macdougal Street where Fellowes has his room in a little court, and as we came out some one tagged us. Fellowes rather expected something of the kind and we planned to dodge. The chap was handicapped with a lame foot, but we couldn't go over fast on account of the heavy snow tonight and he kept pretty close to us till we got to the Arch. Fellowes was strong for him not knowing where we were coming and we whipped around Washington Place into Ninth Street, down Fifth Avenue and up the Mews before he'd turned into the Avenue. It's still snowing a little and the tracks are pretty well mixed up, so I figure we've lost him."

"Will you have some toddy, Mr. Fellowes?" asked Peggy.

"It's a cabin welcome you're givin' me," answered the old fellow, basking before the grateful warmth of the fire. "I don't go much on grog as a rule. I stopped usin' it forty year ago; but I'm old now, and on a night like this it's welcome. Seein' as Mister Addams has told me I'm to spin my own yarn, why, I'll wet my whistle once in a while an' be obliged to ye."

Within a few minutes the group was established, the girl leaning forward interestedly from her chair, elbows on knees and her chin between her hands, Addams and Winton on the lounge with their cigars, centering their attention on Fellowes who sat, stroking his beard, looking meditatively into the fire.

"WE'LL have to go a long ways back," he commenced at last. "Back before any of your daddies was born, I reckon, likely enough; back to Californy an' the gold rush—the days of forty-nine. I'm eighty-five, I am, an' good for a few years yet. I'm hearty an' sound, an' my brain can box it's own compass. Thet's because I've left this stuff alone."

He pushed his tumbler away from him, took a cigar and lighted it, watching the smoke spirals in silence.

"I'm tryin' to get the yarn all shipshape without makin' too many tacks," he said. "There's sixty-five years to cover, an' there's no sense in wasting time."

Addams brought a book and a roll of papers over to the little table.

"Here's an atlas and some charts that will help us to follow the story better," he said. "And some papers that would naturally be termed supporting evidence."

"Mostly for my benefit, I suppose," laughed Jim. "Wait till I put some more wood on the fire, Mr. Fellowes, before you start in."

He replenished the andirons and the flames leaped lustily, besieging the dusk of the great studio, unlighted save for the fire and one shaded lamp raised on a standard.

"Selim will bring some more wood in presently," said Peggy. "Now, Mr. Fellowes, we're all comfy and curious."

The old man looked at her eager face with kindly eyes.

"If my gal had lived," he said, "she'd be twice your age by now. She had the same kind of hair you've got, miss, beggin' your pardon—color of gold with flames reflected in it. But she's dead, long since, dead from the lust o' gold, dead from the gold an' the curse that lies upon it.

"I wasn't born so far from here," he went on. "Up in Maine on a farm that run down to the sea at Penobscot Bay. I used to sail about in a catboat an' the water always suited me better than the land, when it come to ploughing of it, though I didn't dream I was goin' to sail the seas I did before I'd get through my adventurin' an' back to Maine again.

"I was twenty when the gold fever broke out. They was a ship goin' 'roun' the Horn to the diggin's, an' with a lot of my pals, wild ones they was, the fever caught me an' we shipped to make our fortunes. It was a tough trip 'round, nine weeks tryin' to make westing. When we wasn't soaked through an' tired out we'd talk off-watch of just one thing—gold! We'd brag how we was goin' to get it, an' what we was goin' to do with it. At 'Frisco we did what all the crews did, deserted an' started off for the diggin's on the American River—that was the richest place goin' when we arrived.

"There was a fellow named Henley aboard. A bad one——"

He lowered his voice and looked furtively about him.

"A bad one! But he was older than most of us an' we thought he was a fine sort, as youngsters will, lookin' for short-cuts to be smart. He got to be the leader of a gang of about a dozen of us, all off the ship 'cept a chap named Chappell—'Chappie' we used to call him. He'd come from Australy—some said he was a Botany Bay man, a convict who'd cut loose. He was another bad one. I reckon they wasn't a heap to choose between any of us, on'y some knew more'n the rest. But we was all eager to learn.

"The upshot of it was that we got into trouble at Fort Sutter; Henley, Chappie, me an' a couple of others. They suspected Henley an' Chappie of crooked work with the cards an' we was identified with 'em. If they'd bin sure they'd likely have lynched the crowd of us, but they give us the benefit of the doubt and ran us out of the fort. That queered us in Sacramento an' most everywhere for that matter, so we split up.

"I got a job washing dishes, when I was hungry enough to eat the scraps off 'em, an' makin' beds for better men. I called 'em luckier men then. What they *was*, was honester. But the gang had all taken up Henley's an' Chappie's p'int of view, which was to let the other fellow do the diggin' an' get the gold out of him some easier way.

"I was pretty sick of playin' chambermaid, an' when Henley showed up one night I was ripe to listen to him. His talk sounded good to me. I suppose there never was a kid yet who didn't think it great to be a highwayman or a pirate, an' I was only a half-baked kid, at that.

"There were four men staying in the place where I was working who had made a big clean-up on the North Fork of the American. They had been the first to work on the big placer bars an' they had struck it rich, mighty rich, so that folks pointed them out on the street.

"They'd cleaned up half a million apiece, talk said, though we found out later that it was about two hundred thousand, an' they had declared themselves as ag'in goin' down to San Francisco on the river steamers. The steamers was jest plain floatin' hells, what with the gambling goin' on and the crowd that hung 'roun' the men who'd made their stakes. So these four—they'd come 'roun' the Horn, same as we had, an' had some workin' knowledge of seamanship—figgered on gettin' hold of a schooner an' a skipper an' sailin' direct to the Isthmus, doin' their own work, sailors bein' scarce, an' so keepin' out of the way of the rough crowd on the steamers an' in San Francisco, an' playin' guard to their own gold.

"Henley put it up to me to find out their plans, an' I, like a young fool, was proud of the job. I used to be in their room on an' off servin' drinks, an' I learned easy enough that they had made a dicker with the captain of a schooner to hire the ship at a top price to take them to the Isthmus. The skipper would pick up a crowd there bound for the diggin's an' make good money both ways. The skipper's name was Ellersby. He was a hard drinker in spells an' generally a rotten lot, but he could navigate and they didn't have much choice.

"First off, Henley had the idea of a crowd of us shippin' as sailors, but he decided it 'ud look too suspicious when nobody, unless they'd made their pile, was leavin'. Also we was still liable to be recognized in a bunch as the crowd that was run out of Fort Sutter. So he got to makin' friends with Ellersby, the skipper, drinkin' with him an' stickin' close while the schooner was gettin' provisioned up, an' one night he got the bunch of us together—they was four, outside of Henley, Chappell and me—an' told us the skipper had promised to come into the scheme for an equal share, meanin' an eighth.

"There was a sloop, not seaworthy but good enough for a calm river trip, that he figgered on stealin'. The seven of us was to run down to where the San Joaquin River runs into the Sacramento at Carquinez Straits, up at the north end of San Francisco Bay. There's a lot of islands there—a delta, they calls it—an' we was to 'stablish ourselves on one of these an' wait for Ellersby to come along at nightfall an' run the schooner on to a mud flat.

"It worked out to a charm. We got the

sloop an' ran down with the tide, hidin' up in a slough that divided one of the islands. 'Cordin' to schedule the schooner come along after dark, buckin' the start of the flood. There was a mist, what they call a tule-fog, all over the river, an' Ellersby slid the schooner on the mud so soft that the four miners, asleep in the cabin, didn't know a thing till we'd boarded the schooner in a small boat, an' when Ellersby called down to 'em to come on deck they found us waitin' for them with belayin' pins.

"Henley showed a bit of himself there, if we'd had sense enough to see it. He was all for gettin' rid of the miners, claimin' dead men told no tales. Chappell backed him up, but the rest of us wouldn't stand for it. So we set 'em, bound an' gagged, on a little reedy island, all bog, an' floated the schooner off easy enough on the full tide, runnin' on the ebb down San Francisco Bay, out through the Gate, a Golden Gate to us that trip all right, with the dust an' nuggets stowed away in the hold—ours!

"Once free an' fair of the Farallones we held a palaver. There was a chance of the miners gettin' picked off the island sooner than we expected. That might mean we'd reach the Isthmus to find the news ahead of us an' a law-an'-order committee waitin' for us. The same thing might happen in Honolulu, which port we figgered on for a long while, or in any of the South American ports. A trip clean 'round the Horn was out of the question in the schooner, let alone that we didn't have grub enough for that long a trip.

"Finally, Ellersby, who had been mixed up in opium smuggling in the Hawaiian Islands—Sandwich Islands they called 'em those days—proposed to sneak quietly into Pearl Harbor, eight miles from Honolulu, hide up in one of the arms of the big lochs there, find out if the coast was clear as far as news of the affair was concerned, an' if everything was all right buy or charter some other craft an' sail to New Zealand or Australy in her or, better still, ship the gold as parts of machinery an' take passage in a steamer.

"We settled on that plan finally, though if we'd carried it out, we'd have run right into trouble, for the news of the robbery was in Honolulu long before we'd have made it."

Fellowes paused and took a sip of his toddy which Peggy had made hot again.

His auditors were silent, transported from the New York studio by the straightforward vividness of the old man's delivery to the pirated schooner on the Pacific Ocean outside San Francisco, with the eight buccaneers in council in the tiny cabin.

Addams broke the pause by picking up the papers he had deposited on the table and separating them.

"I'll read you a couple of extracts while Fellowes rests for a minute," he said, unfolding a newspaper yellowed with age.

"This is the Sacramento *Bee* of July sixth, eighteen fifty," he announced. "I'll read you the article:

PIRACY ON THE SACRAMENTO

GANG OF VILLAINS ROB MINERS OF THEIR HARD-EARNED TREASURE

The River Steamer *Chrysopolis* brought back to Sacramento today four miners whose luck on the North Fork of the American has been the comment, and possibly aroused the jealousy of many. These men, Rivers, Thorn, Edwards and Burns, who chartered the schooner *Lady Mine* from Captain Ellersby to convey themselves and their dust, amounting to about eight hundred thousand dollars, to the Isthmus, were waylaid by a ruffianly gang of pirates, acting in consort with Captain Ellersby, who is, it appears, himself somewhat notorious, and robbed of their gold. They were captured without the chance to make resistance for the treasure they had wrung from the river-bars, and set, bound and gagged, on a little island, while the schooner, with Ellersby and the ruffians aboard, sailed through Carquinez Straits, presumably for the Isthmus or some other port.

The villains were something short of a dozen in number, consisting of two men appearing to be the leaders, by name Henley and Chappell, the last suspected of being a convict from Australia, and their followers. Henley and Chappell were recently run out of Fort Sutter for suspected trickery at cards. Another who was recognized by the unfortunate miners was a young man named Jared Fellowes who had been employed out of charity at the Davis House as dishwasher and bedmaker, where, it is thought, he learned of the plans of Rivers and his three companions.

Rivers managed to work the gag from his mouth and succeeded in getting the attention of the upbound *Chrysopolis* from which Captain Rollins promptly despatched a boat in answer to the call for help. The unfortunate men are now penniless, but, with the spirit of true Argonauts, leave within a few days for the North Fork where they hope to recoup themselves for their stolen fortunes.

The news will be sent to San Francisco on the hope of apprehending the men. All outgoing steamers will carry the story of the outrage and it is trusted the rascals will soon be apprehended. Should they be returned to Sacramento, we recommend them to the attention of the Vigilance Committee. It is high time that some semblance of law and order be maintained.

"That's the *Bee*. This other is a copy of the San Francisco *Chronicle* of a little later date, where the story is practically reproduced. There is also a copy of the *Commercial Advertiser* of Honolulu, dated August the third, with a reprint."

"Thankee, Mister Addams," said Fellowes. "Of course, we didn't figger for a minnit the miners would be picked up that soon, but, as you'll see, if we'd made Honolulu they'd have been all cocked an' primed an' waitin' for us.

"But we didn't get there. Three days out, nothin' would do but we break out the gold an' figger out just what the shares was. We counted twenty boxes, made up of hooped iron over heavy timber, weighin' close to two hundred apiece. One of 'em we took into the cabin an' opened up. Two men was on deck, an' when the rest of us ran our hands through the dust—heavy colors an' rough grains all of it—an' began shoutin', they left the schooner to itself an' come down to join us. Ellersby swore at 'em but at last he went on deck by himself, leavin' the rest of us handlin' the glitterin' heavy stuff like a lot of kids in their first sand-pile. That's where the trouble started.

"Some sort of devil crept out of that case and took charge of all of us. We got the gold-fever. You don't know what that means, but I've seen it work a hundred times—a hundred places. It means greed an' hatred an' murder. I've seen a man's eyes change to hold the gleam of the gold in it, an' his nature change at the same time. That's the way it was with us.

"We spent that gold a thousan' ways, an' cursed because we couldn't get to where we could toss it on counters an' across bars. They was eight of us, with a tenth of a million apiece, an' not able to use it. Of course we started gambling an' drinkin' with it.

"We'd arranged watches, but nobody would leave the table. We ate stuff out of cans without cookin' it, an' when anybody took the wheel it was usually some one tryin' to sober up. The skipper started to drinkin' in his cabin. He turned nasty an' went 'round with his revolver threatenin' to shoot any one who wouldn't take his trick. We had sense enough left not to break with him, 'count of his bein' the only navigator on board. But Henley used to nod an' wink when he was absent, an' tell how we'd get rid of him soon as we were in sight of land. 'We'll cut up his share alike,' he said.

"That meant fourteen thousand more for each of us. An' they wasn't one of us but what figgered how much more would come to him if the rest should die. It sounds pretty terrible to think of murder breedin' that way; but it was the curse of the gold, an' the lust of it. If we'd come by it honest it might have been different, but we was outlaws anyway.

"Henley, first, an' Chappell next, began to win all the time at cards. We all suspected them of cheating, but we didn't catch them at it. Then, after fourteen days, we run into the doldrums between the northwest an' southeast trades, an' slatted sails day after day in a dead calm.

"I got sick of the cards, not bein' able to win an' not willin' to go on losin', an' spent most of the time on deck. It was bad enough there, but it was a little hell in the cabin. The schooner had carried pearl-shell an' copra an' trepang. She was dirty in the hold an' sour of bilge. You can figger what it was like under the steady sun with the pitch squeezin' out of the seams. The skipper was in his cabin most of the while, drinkin' steady. There was nothin' to do in workin' the ship, an' the wheel spun any way it wanted.

"Next thing, the water went bad. Then every one began to get sick eatin' the canned grub, uncooked. Not a drop of medicine aboard, an' the only doctor in sight was Doctor Shark. They was five of *them* trailin' astern, one for each man that was goin' to be served to 'em. The curse had started."

Fellowes stopped and passed his hand in front of his eyes. The two men sat silent with frowning brows. Peggy shuddered and stirred the fire.

Suddenly she sprang up with an exclamation.

"The window!" she cried. "There, at the window!"

CHAPTER III

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW

THE big north window of the studio was a-steam from the cold without and the warmth within. Winton, working late, had neglected to cover the lower panes with the blind, and, as the younger men sprang up, turning swiftly, while Fellowes elbowed himself from his chair and Peggy stood pointing, a swift, evasive shadow showed for a second against the misty glass and then vanished.

"It's Henley!" hoarsely exclaimed the old man, his face working. "He's trailed us."

"It may not be he," said Addams. "Come on, Jim! Where's that torch of yours?"

The two men passed through the little passage and out into the crisp air of the Mews. An electric arc at the alley's entrance to Fifth Avenue dimly illumined the lately fallen snow, stained faintly here and there by the orange light from a window. The snow had ceased. Along the narrow sidewalk, halting in front of the studio window as if some one had been peering within, a trail showed clearly defined, one sharp imprint and the blur of a dragging foot, coming and going back to Fifth Avenue. There was no one in sight. The mews seemed utterly deserted.

"That's the lame chap who followed from Fellowes's lodgings," said Addams.

"Fellowes said it was Henley," said Jim. "Did he mean the chap that was the leader. He must be about a hundred, by all accounts. He's pretty spry in his old age."

"No, his son. You'll hear about him later. He's got the old boy pretty nervous. Trying to force him to tell where the gold is. Come on in, Jim. It's freezing. And pull down that blind."

"It was Henley?" asked Fellowes anxiously. "He's getting desperate, I tell you——"

"He can't get in to do you any harm here," soothed Peggy. "Won't you sit down again?"

He suffered himself to be made comfortable again, but his corded hands were shaky and the look of alarm had come into his gray eyes once more.

"See here," said Winton, "you don't have to go home tonight. Archer, you'll stay here. Your usual room's ready for you and we can fix up Fellowes here with a shakedown in the studio. Eh, Peggy?"

"Easily," she answered. "I'll tell Selim."

She pressed a button and the tinkle of a bell sounded distantly.

"This is what he's after," said Fellowes, reassured somewhat. "This — and this, meanin' the whereabouts of the gold—only he don't know just what shape I carry them in."

He took from his inner pocket a piece of stout paper, creased in its well worn folds, and laid it on the table near Addams, while he fumbled at his waistcoat and finally brought out a thick, old-fashioned silver watch.

"You keep it," he said to Addams. "I've always meant you to have 'em. I'll feel safer."

Addams carefully spread out the paper which proved to be a roughly drawn map of an island, marked here and there with faded lettering.

"I'll come to that presently," said Fellowes, as Addams laid it on the table. "Who's that?"

He covered the map with his great hand, staring fearfully at a figure that glided silently out of the shadows. A lithe, swarthy man, with black almond-shaped eyes and thin, straight nose, black-browed, his crisp black hair barely topping the shoulder of Peggy Winton who gave him some quiet orders to which he bowed and departed as quietly as he had come.

"That's Selim," explained Winton. "Our butler, cook and man-of-all-work. We couldn't get along without Selim. You needn't be afraid of him."

"He looks like a South Sea Kanaka," said Fellowes, still keeping his big hand over the map.

"He's an Arab," said Winton. "Peggy picked him up at an employment agency, and he's *some* cook. She nursed him through an attack of pneumonia and he worships the ground she walks on. Don't worry about Selim. He's eaten our salt and he's true as steel."

"He's brown!" said Fellowes suspiciously. "And if you've seen as much of brown skins as I have, you wouldn't trust 'em out of your sight and not too much in it, though some of them was mighty good to me once."

He watched the Arab when he returned with fresh logs for the fire, and waited until he left the room before speaking. Then he attempted an apology.

"I ain't aimin' to say anything against your servant, miss," he said. "Only, three-quarters of a million is enough to turn any man's head, white or brown. Where was I?"

"Fourteen days out, in a dead calm, with five sharks following on behind," said Winton in a voice the affected calm of which betrayed his eagerness, while Addams smiled quietly across at him.

"Five sharks waitin' for five men," repeated Fellowes. "Well, they got 'em, three of 'em, in the next ten days. Ptomaines, it was, only we didn't know the name of it those days. Then another went. He was in his bunk for a day before any one got away from the cards long enough to get rid of him. This is a pretty rough yarn for a woman to listen to, miss?"

He turned to Peggy.

"No, no. Go on," she said. "It's really happened and I'm not afraid to hear of such things, or see them if I have to."

Fellowes looked at her admiringly.

"It happened, all right," he said grimly. "Henley went on winning till he owned pretty nigh half the gold, outside the skipper's share. A chap we knew as Zeb, a Southerner, thought he caught him slipping an ace—an' he told him so. I was on deck an' didn't see what happened, but I heard the shot, an' that night Zeb went to Doctor Shark.

"THAT left three of us, not countin' the skipper—Henley, Chappell the convict, an' me. I had held on to most of my share an' I wouldn't play cards any more. Chappell an' Henley kept at it for a bit an' then they quit. Henley tried to make up to me an' pretty soon proposed we get rid of Chappell who, he claimed, wanted to do *me* up so's there'd be more to share.

"I was in a funk by this time—as we used to call it—a blue funk. I was only a kid, sick of the whole trip an' scared of Henley. He was just plain devil. I used to see him lookin' at me an' at Chappell, stealthy, an' I knew if we ever got our fingers on any of the gold it wouldn't be his fault. He quarreled with the skipper, too, but he couldn't bluff Ellersby. Then Chappell an' Henley sulked. Ellersby was a wonder. He was drinkin' steady, but it didn't seem to have any effect on him, 'cept that his eyes looked sometimes like a mad dog's, with a red light in them. He watched Henley all the time with a snarl on his lips, just like a dog that's suspicious of ye.

"We got to the last of the good water—you use up a lot of it in that kind of weather—an' things looked pretty bad when we run into a rain-squall, at last, an' filled up everything we could. Then a roarin' monsoon come up out of the South an' whirled us away on the fringe of it, 'way off the course. All four of us did what we could to work the schooner, but you can't do much with a monsoon. When it threw us off its track an' left us, the schooner was leakin' badly an' the two main boats, whalers, was smashed to bits. That left only a little square-sterned dingey, hardly big enough to carry four men, let alone the gold.

"An' it looked as if we'd have to take to the boat. The foremast had sprung a steady leak. The skipper thought a butt had started somewhere else, an' the best we could do at the pumps couldn't keep the water from rising. At last you could hear it sloshing about in the hold where the gold was stowed.

"Ellersby talked it over with us. There was an island reported by whalers once in a while, an' known to the natives, that was somewhere near where we was. But he wasn't sure that it was really there or that we could find it. He didn't have its position an' the South Pacific is full of islands that are reported an' can't be found when they're looked for.

"If we could reach it, he proposed to careen the schooner an' fix the leak. We could do that or take a chance in the boat without the gold, or we could bury the gold on the island if we found it an' couldn't fix the leak, an' make for Hawaii in the dingey from there, a trip of about eight hundred miles, he told us.

"We took votes on it. I voted for the island. That gave me another chance that I knew I'd lose if it came to a question of leaving the gold out of the boat rather than me. My weight in gold was worth a whole lot more than I was, right then. The skipper voted with me, wantin' to save his ship, an' then Chappell sided in. He argued that a small boat arrivin' at Honolulu, with or without gold, was goin' to be an object of more curiosity than we was lookin' for. So we agreed to try for the island an' do what we could with the ship.

"It was touch an' go. The water came up till the schooner slogged roun' like a water-soaked log. Any kind of a sea would have finished us. It was the tenth of August, thirty-nine days since Sacramento, when I saw a little speck on the horizon, early in the afternoon.

"We slapped each other on the back, all except the skipper who was surly with the responsibility. We got the sodden schooner close-hauled to the course at last, under jib an' mainsail; Ellersby took the wheel, Chappell, who had been feelin' sick, went into the cabin an' Henley an' me stood by to handle sheets. Henley was sore at Chappell. He wasn't feelin' over an' above good himself, but Chappell deliberately turned into his bunk an' stayed there.

"I can see the land as it opened up, now," said Fellowes, looking into the fire. "There was a low peak with a long low cliff runnin' out from it to a cape, an' beyond the cape a little island the shape of a thimble. When we got close the gulls lifted like the top of the island was comin' off. The slopes was white with guano. The surf was thunderin' on the reef an' we couldn't make out an opening. The only chance was to go between the cape an' the little island. The water was boilin' an' swirlin' in the channel, but the schooner was sluggish an' hard to steer an' we had to take short-cuts. Accordin' to reports there was an entrance somewheres in the reef—an' we had to find it.

"Ellersby orders Henley to get Chappie up to help on the tack, an' he went below while we edged in closer to the reef, the schooner gettin' slower an' more logy every minnit. I went down to hurry the two of them up an' found the pair of 'em rollin' on the floor. Both had knives out an' they were shoutin' an' cursin' too much to listen to me, though I told 'em we'd be on the rocks in a minnit if they didn't lend a hand. All of a sudden Henley gets Chappie's hand between his teeth an' he drops his knife.

"Like a fool he grabbed for it, an' Henley stuck him. He grunted an' huddled up an' Henley an' me races on deck. Just as we reached it the schooner smashes into the reef, scrapes across, staggerin', an' wallows through the lagoon, rail awash. They was no one at the wheel, the main-boom had broke away from sheet an' tackle an' must have thrashed the skipper overboard. A blind breaker took us like it would a surf-boat an' flung us on the sand, buryin' the bows deep an' firm.

"We picked ourselves up an' stood lookin' at each other on the slantin' deck in the sunset—red like blood it was, I remember—two of us out of the eight, a lonely beach an' lava cliffs frownin' down at us, the schooner with its back broken, a dead man in the cabin an' three-quarters of a million in gold in the waterlogged hold."

He stopped and sat with his hands on his knees, breathing hard, staring into the heart of the fire as if it were the sunset on the lonely, bird-haunted isle, trembling with the excitement of his tale.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIGURES IN THE WATCH-CASE

PEGGY WINTON got up and went over to Fellowes's chair.

"You're tired," she said gently. "You must go to bed and tell us the rest in the morning. It's a shame to sit listening here, never thinking of how you were feeling."

"That's all right, miss," assured Fellowes. "I'm tougher than you think. I'll rest a bit an' take another drop o' somethin' hot, if you don't mind. But I'll finish the yarn tonight, if you'll listen. There's some things Mr. Addams ain't heard yet that I want him to know. It's gettin' close to the end of the voyage for me an' I want to tell it while I can."

He looked fearfully at the window, where the blind had now been drawn, and about the dark corners of the room, then leaned back, closing his eyes.

Addams picked up the map again and the three of them examined it. On it was shown the island of the wreck, the cone drawn as a hollow crater. Near the cape were two crosses, one lettered "wreck" the other "caves here." The reef was indicated with an opening on the opposite side of the promontory from the two crosses. At the bottom was the word "*Kapukalipelipe*."

"That's the native name for the place," explained Addams. "Means 'the wide-mouthed hole,' Fellowes says, referring, of course, to the crater."

"There's no position marked on the map," said Winton in a low voice.

Fellowes sat forward in his chair.

"I'm coming to that, sir," he said, "in just a minnit. So far that's a secret. I haven't even told Mister Addams, an' if it wasn't for him I'd have been underground in a pauper's grave a month or more ago. I'm ready now for the rest of the yarn.

"That night Henley an' me slept on the beach by a fire. He was pretty sick, but I made shift to get some stuff from the lazarette an' cook a warm meal. That heartened us both up a bit. Next morning we found the body of the skipper washed ashore an' buried it. Then we got Chappie's body up from the cabin an' did the same with that.

After, we explored the island, what they was of it—one big crater, choked with lava, another one on the cape, smaller, an' I reckon still another on the little island. Not a thing grew on the place 'cept a spiky-leaved plant all covered with silver hairs. There was nothin' livin' but the sea-birds, an' no fresh water.

"Down not far from where the schooner was ashore we found some caves with funny carvings of men an' animals all over the walls an' roof. I've seen just the same sort of picters out West in Indian caves. You could only get in the caves at low tide, an' then some of the carvings was under water. I figgered that the island had been higher out of water once an' had sunk down in some volcanic breakout, like lots of the South Sea islands have.

"We took stock. Henley was gettin' weaker an' we was pretty well up against it. We didn't have more than thirty gallons of good water. It wasn't the rainy season, as the skipper had told us, an' we had the chance of making Hawaii, eight hundred miles away, in a little open boat, or dyin' of thirst either there on the island or in the boat if we was too long on the trip.

"The boat, which had been stored amidships, was in fairly good shape. Henley started to tinker it up an' rig up a mast an' sail while I went below for grub. I reckon we was both scared after sizin' up the water. I worked in a sweat pilin' up cans an' tryin' to make up my mind what to take, listenin' to Henley draggin' an' scrapin' on deck with the boat. I was afraid of him, too. I still figgered he might get rid of me an' put my weight into gold in the boat. It 'ud help with the water, too, if I was out of the way. So I went into the skipper's cabin, hopin' to find a pistol of some sort, an' come across the log.

"I turned over the pages an' found what I hoped for. Drunk as he was, the skipper's habit was strong enough for him to set down the position regular an' keep up the log. His reckonin' that noon was on the last page. That was as good as a pistol to me. We'd have to leave some of the gold anyway. Even if Henley made away with me he couldn't pack it all. So I figgered I'd hold the position of the island as a weapon. Then we could come back for the gold, an' I figgered we'd have to leave enough behind to make it worth while for Henley not to shoot me in the back.

"First I thought I'd keep the figgers in my head. Seemed as if I must remember them, but I wasn't sure of myself. I started to tear out the sheet an' then I thought of my watch. I took my knife an' scratched the figgers on the back lid which screwed off."

Addams had set the watch as a weight on top of the map. Fellowes unscrewed the case from the back of the old-fashioned key-winder and passed the lid to Archer who read the figures by the lamp.

"See if you can make them out, Peggy," he said.

The girl took the silver case.

"One-six-five-four-naught-W?"

"One hundred and sixty-five degrees and forty minutes west longitude from Greenwich," he explained.

"One-two-two-naught-N—that's north I suppose?"

"North of the Equator, south of the Tropic of Capricorn. Twelve degrees and twenty minutes north latitude. Look it up on that chart, Jim. You'll find it easily enough."

Winton obediently unrolled a U. S. hydrographic survey chart of the Southern Pacific and looked up the position.

"It's marked here!" he said excitedly. "Not under any name, though. There's just a dot and the lettering 'E. D. reported 1901.' "

"Meaning that some ship reported that they had seen, or thought they had seen, an island about that position. That was in 1901. E. D. stands for 'Existence Doubtful.' That's the chart for this year. The first official recognition of possible land was in 1901, and the last. But it corroborates Fellowes's yarn. There's nothing to tie it up with a treasure island without Fellowes's story and nothing then to show where the treasure is without the map indicating the caves."

"An' nothin' *then* to tell which cave it is or how it's hidden," chuckled the old man. "Without I told it—an' I've told it to no one, mind you—you could dig an' prod about the caves for twenty years an' never find it. That part of it, miss, I'm goin' to tell to you, because you've been kind to me, an' because you look as my daughter might have looked if she'd lived. That gives you a share in it, though I've got an idea—" the gray eyes twinkled as he glanced at Addams and the girl, standing together by the lamp—"that you would have a share in it anyway. Will you come over here where I can whisper it to ye?"

Peggy, with bright eyes, came lightly over and perched on the arm of the big chair.

"Remember now," said Fellowes, "it's still a secret. Just between you an' me. You're not to tell it unless I say so or unless something should happen to me. An' then tell it when you want to. Only don' be in too much of a hurry. It's worth three-quarters of a million!"

Addams and Winton stepped aside while the old man cupped his horny palm and whispered into the shell-like ear of the girl, who nodded her comprehension as he whispered the information.

"I understand," she said. "And under no conditions am I to tell it to any one but you, Archer," she said, blushing a little.

"That lets *me* out," said Jim. "I see where I have to be a private in this expedition."

"Then you are beginning to think seriously of it?" queried Archer not without emphasis.

"Oh, I've caught it," acknowledged Jim "the gold fever, or the gold lust, or whatever you call it. I'm infected. Go on with the yarn, Mr. Fellowes. Have a fresh cigar."

"Thankee kindly, I will," said the old man, and lit one.

"LET me see. Oh, I'd scratched the figgers in my watch. Well, I tore out the sheet from the log, anyway. I rolled it into a spill, filled my pipe an' lit it with the page. I burned it to the end an' smeared out the ashes with my foot. Then I shoved the rest of the logbook 'way back in the lazarette. I felt better then. I bumped into the skipper's coat hangin' by the door as I was comin' out, an' struck somethin' hard. It was a pistol, loaded up. I stuck it in my pocket and felt equal to Henley any time. Then I took the grub up on deck.

"Between us, though Henley was so weak he had to sit down every little while, we got the dingey into the water an' stowed the provisions. We got into it to test it an' the gunnels were pretty low. I caught Henley lookin' at me an' shifted so he could see the pistol in my pocket. He didn't say a word till we got the boat afloat an' tied an' was both in the cabin takin' a last look 'round. Then he stopped by the box of gold that had been broken on the trip.

" 'We better bury the rest of this in the caves,' he said. 'We can take this along, I reckon, if we dump one of those kegs of beef. How far's Hawaii, did Ellersby say? Where's the logbook?'

"He started to look for it, me watchin' him. Presently he turned and looked at me. 'Where is it?' he asked.

"I had my hand on the grip of the pistol an' I looked back at him an' says,

" 'It's no use lookin' for it. I chucked it away.'

"He watched me steady for a minnit. 'You artful devil,' he says. 'You must have got the figgers somewheres. You're a fox, you are,' he says. 'I always knew you for a smart 'un, that's why I made a pal of you. Let's have a look at the figgers, Jared, an' we'll map things out.'

"I kept my hand on the pistol an' my eyes close on his. I could see he was wonderin' whether he should make a jump for me, but he was pretty weak an' I reckon I must have looked as if I was ready for him. 'The figgers is in my head,' I says, 'an' goin' to stay there.'

"He shook his head at me as if he was admirin' me for bein' smart. 'Foxy, Jared, foxy,' he says, 'but foolish. You might forget 'em. Better put 'em down while they're fresh.'

" 'Not me,' I told him. 'Hawaii's about eight hundred miles, due northeast. That's all you'll get out of me. I'll play square with you,' I told him, 'an' now you'll have to play square with me.'

"He kept lookin' at me close, wonderin' whether I was lyin'. Then he give it up. 'All right, Jared,' he said, with a smile that looked like the start of a bite, 'I see I'll have to take good care of you.'

"That afternoon we worked like stevedores handlin' the gold. It was hot, an' we stripped. Once Henley said he was played out an' lay down for a bit of a nap while I finished hidin' the chests where we'd put 'em away inside the cave. I left him in the shade of a rock an' when I came out he was still there with his eyes shut, but, when I picked up my clothes, I could tell he'd been through 'em, looking for a paper with the position set down on it. He didn't think of the watch though.

"I'd packed my pistol with me so he couldn't take that. I hadn't thought of it when I took my duds off, but it was a good move to let him go through them—or he might have murdered me in the boat when I was asleep, for I c'd see he hadn't been satisfied about what I said of the figgers bein' in my head.

"Finally we got everything stowed in one of the caves—you know where, miss."

Peggy nodded.

"We got the opened chest into the little boat an' was so done up we slep' on the beach all night, too tired to make a fire or cook a meal.

"Next mornin' Henley was in a high fever an' I had a hard time to get him into the boat. He was off his head at times an' wished we should stay by the gold, but I got him quieted down. I rowed around the point, inside the reef, to the opening on the other side of the island, got up my rag of a sail, fixed Henley so he'd be in the shadow of it on the bottom boards, an' steered northeast by the compass with a steady breeze drivin' us due from behind.

"I've often laid nights when I couldn't sleep an' thought about that trip. There was a long time when it was all out of my head, as I'll tell you, though now I remember everything that happened as if it was yesterday. There was me in the stern with the opened box of gold between my feet. Then Henley, moanin' for water an' me givin' him all we c'd spare, an' more. Stowed all about was a keg of beef, the water-cask an' canned crackers an' stuff. The bows of the cranky little boat was cocked 'way up. I had a canvas over the water-cask an' kept it wet with seawater to let the wind hold the stuff as cool as possible.

"It was sun—sun—sun, fourteen hours of the day, dryin' you to a mummy, crackin' your lips, swellin' up your tongue an' spoilin' the canned stuff so I had to throw it all overboard. The beef went pretty bad an' there was nothin' but that, the crackers, some cans of tomatoes an' the water—hot water, at that.

"The third day a big shark slipped up astern an' kep' trailin'. He was the one of the five, I figgered out, that hadn't had his share, an' I wondered which one of us it was goin' to be, an' didn't care much. There was his fin, night an' mornin' like a V upside down. After a while I got to talkin' to him. Henley was unconscious most of the time. My hands cracked an' I didn't want to eat—couldn't keep the food down when I did.

"I never was a navigator. Anyway, all I had was one watch an' no chronometer, so I cu'dn't have even figgered out latitude if I'd known how. I had no idea of dead reckonin', no log, an' I didn't know what current might be swingin' me. I figgered that the gold-island was the point of a big triangle with the Hawaiians makin' the base line of about four hundred miles. I wanted to hit that base somewhere. In a straight line, it was an eight-hundred-mile course I had to run. It didn't seem I could miss them altogether if I wasn't blown off my course or drifted too far when I was asleep. To offset that I lowered the sail nights when I napped. If I did happen to miss the Islands it was the end, of course, with nothin' closer than two thousand miles on the course an' small chance of pickin' them up again if I once passed 'em.

"I figgered to make eighty miles a day, sleepin' an' wakin', if the wind held. It was guesswork, of course, without any log. At the rate the water was goin' I had enough to last out.

"Five days along I began to get faint an' confused. I couldn't see anything for minnits at a time. Henley was dead, I thought. I crawled over twice an' wet his lips, which was all black, an' he never stirred. I was burned to toast an' more cracks come in my hands. The boat was too low in the water, an', when the breeze was fresh, the spray 'ud hit the bows an' wet me so that I got sea-sores all over.

"Late that fifth night I come to with a start. It was starlight though it was close to dawn. I could see Henley. He'd moved an' was all huddled over the chest. The sky began to shake an' the sun jumped up, an' there was his eyes starin' at me, his lips grinnin', one hand mixed in with the gold.

"The boat tipped high on a wave an' water came runnin' to my feet. Somethin' told me what it was, but I tasted it. I was right. It was *fresh*. I got by Henley an' found the plug out an' the keg bone dry, 'cept the inch or so beneath the bung. Somehow or other Henley must have had a rally an' got out the plug.

"I sat there a while. Then I mopped up what I could with a rag an' squeezed it back into the keg. It wasn't much. The shark come glidin' up alongside an' swirled over showin' his teeth. That set me crazy. 'You ain't goin' to get *me*,' I yelled at him an' I tumbled Henley's body overside. That was the last I saw of the shark.

"Then I began to see yellow. The sun was shinin' into the open chest of gold. I remember grabbin' a pannikin an' scoopin' up the dust, a thousand dollars at a throw, I reckon, an' scatterin' it on the sea like it was yellow seed. I must have emptied it an' then fainted.

"I come back, maybe that day, mebbe the day after, with a squall tippin' the boat over an' my body soakin' in torrents of rain. I must have taken the rain up like a sponge. An', if I hadn't spilled that gold, the boat would have capsized for certain. My sail was down, an' that helped. The squall passed, the sun came out an' I was glad to see it for the first time for many a day. I got some food into me, ran the rainwater off the folds of the sail into the keg, hoisted the sail an' got on the course once more, with a bit of courage still left in me.

"I was afraid of passing land in the night now, an' used to sleep daytimes, under the sail for shade. The stars an' a new moon was enough to make me sure of pickin' up anything the size of the Hawaiis as long as I kept awake. I knew I was makin' longitude by the way the Southern Cross was dippin' close to the horizon. My time was all mixed up, but I figure it was the fourteenth or fifteenth morning when I raised land on either side of me. You'll find them there on the map, Mister Addams, Laau Point on Molokai Island to port of me, an' Kaena Point, on Lanai, to starboard.

"I wasn't out of it yet, till I could get through the reef. I've seen double-ender whaleboats since then rolled end-over makin' an opening, many a time, in the rollers that snake across where the reef is low enough for you to tackle it. I guess the sight of land heartened me up an' put some strength in me, for I caught a comber an' shot across the lagoon an' up the sand on to a bay like a crescent, walled in by lava cliffs with their horns running out far into the sea on each side.

CHAPTER V

THE LEPERS OF MOLOKAI

"THERE wasn't a soul in sight and I knew the natives were friendly, so I lay down in the sand under the shadow of the boat an' slept, with the tide goin' out, till noon, or after, when the sun sneaked over an' got into my eyes. I got something to eat an' started exploring. I was on the lee coast of Molokai, though I didn't know which island I was on then, an' for a bit it looked as if I had jumped out of the soup-kettle on to the stove.

"The little beach was like a prison with the cliffs an' the sea. All the water I had left was about half a gallon, not extry sweet at that, an' there was none in sight. On top of the cliffs I could see palms fringin' the summit an' I knew there was water there if I could make shift to climb up. They was a few big cracks in the cliff wall that looked as if it might be tackled, an' it had to be. But I rested an' slept good all that day an' that night. The sand made a good bed—I could stretch out full length, anyway, an' I slept like a kid.

"Next morning I felt better, an' after breakfast I started to climb. It was hard goin', an' the lava cut like flint. My hands went first, then my clothes, what they was of them, then my shoes. But I had to keep goin', the water was all gone.

"They was a ledge or so I managed to rest on a bit, an' finally I reached a little valley like a pocket, about two-thirds of the way up. It was covered with long grasses, but there wasn't any water. The cliffs up to the palms at the top was worse than the ones I had tackled, but I was afraid of gettin' stiff an' I was about all in so I went to them.

"Half way up I got stuck. I couldn't get up an' I couldn't get down. I stuck there clingin' somehow, the way a sick cat might, gettin' dizzy an' dizzier. A lot of faces like apes was grinnin' at me from the top. I lost my grip about then, fainted, I reckon, an' flopped to the bottom.

"When I come to it was like a nightmare. They was a ring of natives round me, gibberin' Kanaka an' lookin' down at me. They was just scraps of humanity, pretty bad to talk about, let alone look at—the lepers of Molokai. They was kind enough, an' after you got used to 'em you couldn't help but like 'em. They had seen me creepin' up the cliff an', when I fell, climbed down somehow an' hauled me up. They could climb like goats, all of 'em. I had a pretty bad smash in the side of my skull, how bad I never knew, but they fixed it up with plasters of red mud an' herbs an' pulled me through.

"I had headaches for weeks steady an' never got rid of them till years after, an'—I couldn't remember a thing of what happened before I fell from the cliff. I used to sit in the sun like a skeleton, gettin' well little by little an' puzzlin' over who I was, where I come from an' what I'd done. All no good. They brought me my hat, a knife, a watch-key, the watch an' a few coins.

"There was a name in the hat—Jared Fellowes—which I supposed was mine, though I wasn't sure of it. I knew I must have come there in a boat, for the natives swam 'round an' got mine, but there was no name on it. I had a hazy idea, or instinct, that I was a sailor. My arm had been badly twisted an' I didn't try to wind up the watch for a long time. Then I saw the figgers in the lid, but they didn't mean nothing.

"The Board of Health come over about three months after I landed. They quarantined me for a while, but I was all right. I didn't have any open wound, an' leprosy ain't contagious, only infectious. Then they released me, sendin' me to Honolulu as Jared Fellowes—on account of the hat—supposed to be an American citizen. A doctor said he might bring back my memory by an operation, but I had no money to pay for it an' I was shy of bein' experimented on as a pauper patient. So I drifted 'round, callin' myself by my real name an' never knowin' it for sure. You see a sailor buys so much stuff from junk dealers or the slop-chest I might easy be wearing some other chap's cap.

"I shipped on South Sea traders and blackbirders raidin' islands for plantation labor, able seaman an' once second mate, without papers. I was on a whaler for four years. I showed the figgers in the watch to a mate one time, but they was nothin' marked on the charts of them days, an' I give that up as a clue.

"When the war came I was in Boston, after the whalin' v'yage, an' I volunteered. I come out a sergeant. They tell me they's a pension comin' to me, but I don't aim to take it. I volunteered, an' that would be like sayin' I had a string on my offer all the time, 'pears like to me. Anyhow, if I'd had that pension I wouldn't have been freezin' an' starvin' that night in Madison Square an' then—" he looked around with a smile— "I wouldn't be here.

"Well, after the war, I drifted back to Californy. There was the keeper of a boardin'-house had a daughter who took a fancy to me, saved me from gettin' shanghaied on a hell-ship once, an' we married. She was a good woman, too good for me, a long sight. Her father's ways driv' her opposite, an' she was strong for religion.

"By an' by I got to seein' things the way she did. We had a little farm on the coast near Monterey an' did fairly well. We had two youngsters, a boy an' a gal. The boy sickened an' passed away when he was five, an' the gal lived till she was ten. Mary, she believed there must be some sin that set a curse on us, an' it made a bit of a shadow between us, me not bein' able to remember the first part of my life, an' she thinkin' in the back of her head all the time that I must have done somethin' to bring the curse on us.

"Fifteen years after we was married she got a cancer that took her finally. Seemed like they was somethin' against us all right. I was a sort of a head man in the church, an' Mary an' me we prayed for light many a time, but it didn't come.

At the end of the Summer of seventy-six I went to San Francisco about the shipment of some cattle. On the way back the side-rod of the engine snapped an' the train went off the track. They took some of us who was hurt back to San José where the company's surgeons worked over us. I'd got another clip on the head and they raised the bone an' put in a 'pan,' I think they called it."

"Trephined you," suggested Addams.

"That's the word. The doc' told me they was a blood clot an' asked me about my memory. When he told me it would probably all come back I was happy at first an' then a bit afraid, on account of the wife's an' my own beliefs, in case I'd done some crime that had brought the curse on us an' our kiddies. But the doc' said I'd probably have to have some strong clue or link with the past to start things.

"My name didn't mean any more to me than it did before. Doc' said it was all there in the cells ready to light up, waitin' for something to start the current an' turn the switch.

"I saw the figgers in my watch next time I wound it—it was still goin' well—an' somethin' seemed to be tryin' to talk, 'way back in my brain. It give me a headache, but went no farther. I used to moon about, tryin' to think, with my wife boostin' me on, so's if anything was wrong we could fix it. She had got set in the idea that I had a curse on me somewhere; what with broodin' over the kiddies an' gettin' sicker herself each day, it was no wonder. But I couldn't find the switch to those brain-lights of mine.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAN WITH THE DRAGGING FOOT

"ONE day a man drove up to the ranch in a buggy an' asked for me. I was plowin' an' my wife come out an' told me a man about thirty wanted to see me, a man with a dark fringe of beard an' one foot that dragged, givin' the name of Dave Henley.

"It was just as if a bolt of lightnin' had hit me when I heard the name. Everything seemed to come over me in a rush an' I fell to the ground in a sort of a fit. My wife was beside herself. The stranger come over an' helped carry me in, but he didn't leave. He said he was sure now I was the man he wanted.

"When I come to an' he came in the room I nigh fainted again, for he was the spit of his father as I had seen him on the schooner an' dead in the boat. I closed my eyes an' pretended I was still unconscious, thinkin' all the time. The thoughts came clickin' up like one of these movin' picters, an' soon I remembered everything up to the climbin' of the cliff.

"My first thought was that I was glad it wasn't murder I'd done. Then I realized I'd have to get a grip on myself. I wasn't goin' to let Henley's boy drive fear into me, a man grown, like his father did when I was a kid. So I set up at last and got up an' shut the door on the two of us.

"It was Henley's boy all right. Dave, when he sailed 'round the Horn with us in fifty, left a wife, a girl two years old, an' a comin' boy-baby behind him. He didn't say anything to us about it, any more than he did to her about leavin'. But she told the child when it grew up, an' when he was about twenty-five he went out to Californy an' tried to find out something of his father. It didn't take him long to find those papers Mister Addams read you from, but beyond that he could trace nothing. The four miners were gone, clear. Nothing showed beyond the fact that we had got away an' had never been heard of.

"He quit tryin' after a while an' got to minin' himself. That's how he got his lame foot—crushed by timbers. But he never made a strike, an' there was that three-quarters of a million dancin' in his dreams every once in a while. Then he heard my name accidental on the street in San Francisco. It was the only one the papers mentioned you'll recollect, outside Henley an' Chappell and he remembered it. It wasn't a usual one. In the combination my age 'peared to tally up an' off he come to see me an' get his share of the gold.

"I had my nerve back by the time he got through talkin', an' I just laughed at him an' denied everything. He stuck it out, arguin' I hadn't had a fit for nothin', but I got him away till the next mornin'.

"I lay awake that night, pretendin' to be asleep an' sick, but thinkin' hard an' prayin' between whiles. Next mornin' I stood by my guns. Young Henley showed pretty plain he thought me a liar an' said he'd dig up proofs that would force my hand to show him what became of his father an' the gold. It was precious little he cared about the first—he was too much like the old man. His father had deserted his mother an' him still unborn, an' he wasn't wastin' tears or trouble over him, dead or alive. But he went away at last an' left me to face my wife.

"I told her everything. She was just, I reckon, but mighty hard, considerin' I didn't know anything when I married her. But she blamed the kiddies' deaths an' her own-to-come on me an' what I'd done, an' I couldn't disprove it. We tried every way to get some trace of the four miners, but couldn't. Mary got worse all the time an' died inside of a year. Towards the last we hardly spoke. That's what I mean when I say there's a curse on the gold.

"An' it was still workin'. Everything I touched went wrong, land, crops, speculations, till I was down to bed-rock; an' the older I got the poorer I was. Five years ago I tried to get up an expedition to go to the island. I was sick an' nigh broke an' desperate. I figgered the curse had pretty near worked out, my share of it anyway, after sixty years.

"But I didn't look the part. I couldn't well tell the real story of the thing an' I guess they knowed I was lying. Of course I wasn't goin' to give up the real location till the last minnit or they'd have done me out of it. Mebbe I was wrong, I don' know. But I couldn't get the thing to goin'.

"The papers took it up an' made a Sunday story out of it, all wrong except my name an' a drawin' some feller made of me, which was good. That brought Dave Henley to Chicago, five years ago, sixty years old and broke. All the talk in the world wouldn't persuade him I wasn't the man an' didn't know where the treasure was. He offered to share it with me, as he said it was his right. But I had a little money left then an' I wasn't goin' after that treasure with a Henley as my partner. I figgered that would sure resurrect the curse. So I gave him a little of my money an' got away from Chicago on the quiet.

"I figgered it all out finally. That money had to go to some one clean. There was nothing the matter with the gold. It was intended to be used. But I had no right to it, no more than Henley. So I forgot about it. I had this map made when I tried to start the expedition an' I still had the figgers in the watch. I knew Henley reckoned I had the position somewheres an' I knew he'd stop short of nothing to get it. I wasn't the fighting man I used to be. I was old an' wanted to die in a bed, quiet.

"I figgered on leavin' a letter to some institution tellin' them of the gold, but when Mister Addams here picked me up an' saw to it I didn't need to be cold or hungry, I changed my mind."

Addams felt the girl's gaze upon his face. He raised his eyes and met her admiring glance.

"Then," continued Fellowes, "I made up my mind he was the kind of a man who was clean enough to get the gold. He told me he had partners, so I come around to see you an' spin the yarn. You're the clean sort, too. They ain't no curse goin' to worry you.

"Now you've got the map an' the watch with the figgers, an' Miss there has got the location of the gold in the cave. I'm through with it. I'm nigh the end of my voyage an' I'm lookin' for a quiet anchorage.

"The gold is cursed to me. You get it. Give me a bit of an income from it while I live, if you want to—it won't be long—an' that's ample. But you've got Henley to buck. He's like his father—a bad one! I thought I saw him in my court yesterday mornin' an' again after Mister Addams come in the afternoon. He was there this evenin'. He followed us an' looked through the window. Look out for him! He ain't alone in this, an' three-quarters of a million is a big stake. Keep clear an' start right away."

He stopped talking, his head, hoary-set with hair and beard, drooped as Peggy Winton stirred the fire.

Addams gathered together the papers on the table, folding up the map and setting the watch on top of it.

"Then you want me to take care of these, Fellowes?" he said.

"If you will," answered the old man, rousing himself from his drowsiness. "I'll sleep all the better for not having them."

Selim, entering to the ring of his mistress, set a screen about the fire and started to prepare a couch for Fellowes. Addams made a low-voiced suggestion to the girl.

"Selim," she said, "bring a cot for yourself in here." She turned to Fellowes. "Then you'll not be worrying about the man who looked in at the window," she suggested.

"I'll worry no more, now that Mr. Addams has the map and watch and you the secret of the caves," he declared stoutly. "I'll not trouble your man."

Remembering his prejudice against brown skins, the girl forebore to press the matter. Addams picked up the watch and map.

"I'll sleep with these between my mattresses," he said. "Jim, have you got a pistol?"

"An automatic," Jim answered. "It's in my room. I'll give it to you."

"That goes under my pillow," said Addams. "Well, what about turning in? We'll talk over ways and means at breakfast, eh, Peggy? We've got enough to dream on."

"Dream!" exclaimed the girl. "I'm going to sit awake all night thinking. It's all too wonderful and exciting to waste on dreams."

CHAPTER VII

THE MYSTERY IN MONROE COURT

WHEN Selim essayed to wake Jared Fellowes for breakfast the next morning, he found the old man up and dressed, pacing the big studio as if it had been the deck of a ship. He had started the fire, which was snapping briskly, and seemed himself to be full of hardy life and vigor.

"It's done me a world of good," he announced at the breakfast table, "gettin' shut of that map and the whereabouts of the gold. I feel as if the curse was lifted; not shifted on to *your* shoulders, but done away with, unless Henley tries to keep in touch with the treasure. There's a share of the curse comin' to him, I reckon, if he doesn't stand clear an' by. His father got off easy, in a way, compared to me."

The talk about the table soon centered on ways and means, as Addams had suggested overnight.

"The best thing to do, it seems to me," said Addams, "will be to take the train overland direct to San Francisco, then steamer to Honolulu by the Pacific Mail. Then we can charter a trading-schooner or maybe a yacht without much difficulty, I should think. A small schooner would be all right. I remember enough from the old days to navigate her and, Jim, you're a good man, if you'll come."

"If I'll come!" exclaimed Winton indignantly. "Do you think I'm going to stay here drawing plans for people who don't know the difference between Modern Renaissance and Early Egyptian and couldn't pay for either if they did, while you're looting the caves and standing off Mr. Henley, Junior? Not much!"

"Well, then, we'll only need a couple of native sailors to haul and belay. I wonder if Selim knows anything about the water?"

"I'll ask him," said Jim.

Selim, with a flash of his white teeth, declared that he was a top-notch sailor; that he had worked aboard his brother's *dhow* and could steer and row.

"That completes the crew, then," declared Addams. "Selim as cook and bo'sun, and you as first mate, Jim."

"What about me?" inquired Peggy Winton. "I can steer and reef too, at a pinch. You once said yourself, Archer, that I was an 'able seawoman'. Am I to be left behind to watch and wait for the expedition?"

"You can't possibly go, Peggy," put in her brother.

"Why not? It shouldn't be more than a week's trip either way from Honolulu, at the outside. Not so long a voyage as the one we took five years ago to the West Indies with Archer."

"It isn't that you'd be in the way or that we wouldn't be delighted to have you," Addams said slowly. "I think you know that, Peggy. But there's likely to be trouble with Henley and whatever crowd he has got together. They are not going to lose sight of us, neither are they lightly going to give up the chance of getting the money. The risk is too big."

"Archer's right," said Jim. "Sorry, Peggy, but you can't go."

"You forget," she said, "that without me you can't find where the gold is buried. It's my secret. You're with me, aren't you, Mr. Fellowes?"

The old man, keenly enjoying the contest and the girl's spirit, tugged at his beard.

"We might come to terms," he suggested. "I'm not too old to tail on to a rope. Suppose I come with you, if the expense ain't to be too heavy, an' act as bodyguard to Miss Winton. I can still growl—an' bite, too, if it's needed."

"There," declared the girl, her eyes still sparkling. "Mr. Fellowes is with me. If you don't take up, we won't tell you where to dig."

Her brother capitulated with a shrug. She turned to Addams.

"Don't you want me, Archer?" she asked, looking directly at him. "I'll not be left here alone or shipped up to the farm to Dad and Mother."

"Can you ask?" he answered a trifle unsteadily.

"Well, then, that's settled. When do we start? Will you let the Emersons have the studio, Jim?"

"I'll 'phone them right away. They'll be tickled to take it for a few weeks. Emerson's present light is rotten for painting. As for me, I'll be ready to start tomorrow. I'll write the two clients I have on hand just what I think of them, dig out my flannels and yachting togs and be ready to weigh anchor at dawn. How's that?"

"As for you, Peggy, if you insist on going, let's compromise," suggested Addams. "I can see little danger in your coming as far as Honolulu. What do you think, Jim? Then, if there's no sign of Henley, we can discuss it further."

"That's fair, Peggy," said her brother.

Peggy pouted.

"That's because I'm a woman," she said.

"It's because you are our woman, Peggy," corrected Addams. "Jim's sister and my—chum."

"All right," consented the girl reluctantly. "But I'm not agreeing to anything?"

"No. How long will it take you to outfit?" Addams asked as he arose.

"A week?" said Winton sarcastically.

"I'll be ready as soon as you are," she retorted. "When, Archer? You're the leader of the exposition."

"I'll look up the steamer connections and let you know," Addams answered. "No use in marking time in San Francisco, but you can both start in packing. I'm off! I'll draw the remnants of my bank account and report here this afternoon. How about you, Fellowes? I'm glad you're coming. I didn't like the idea of leaving you behind."

"I'll be ready to start an hour after any time you say so, sir," replied Fellowes.

"Good! Clean up what you want from your room. You'll stay here again tonight, and till we leave. That all right, Peggy? Good! Jim, go easy on the wardrobe—we'll travel light and fast."

"Chap's got to look decent on the steamer," protested Winton.

"One steamer-trunk," said Addams. "This isn't a pleasure trip. Peggy, you can have two. Look up your Summer things and get whatever you want for that climate. What's missing we'll get in Honolulu. Will you look out for Selim? I'll see you all later. I'll secure reservations clear through, as soon as I get schedules."

"Hold on a minute, Archer," said Jim. "One word about finance, old chap. It's understood that Peggy and I stand our whack of the expense. Otherwise it's off. That right, Peggy?"

"Surely," she said. "Together we sink or swim, gallant Captain."

She touched her bright hair in a gay salute.

"All right," said Addams, "that's agreed upon."

"Got the watch, Archer?" asked Jim.

"That's something I want to talk about," said Addams. "Fellowes could carry a watch like that without suspicion. But it's a bulky thing to pack and a dangerous thing to lose. Also, it's palpably an out-of-date thing to be packing around. It suggests in itself it may have been preserved for some special reason. It has served its purpose.

"I propose to have the figures tooled out and put them down somewhere else more practical and less likely to be discovered. So, if you don't object, Fellowes, we'll do that. This chap Henley may be sharper than his father. It's foolish taking unnecessary risks. I'll plan out a way we can all carry a copy of the figures without fear of their being found out. And we might as well destroy the map. It's of no practical value."

"I'm agreeable," said Fellowes. "I kind of hate to lose the watch altogether, though it ain't much on time any more. It was the figgers in it that made me nervous. So I'll pack it again after you've fixed it. The map's better burned anyway."

"Better do it now," said Addams. "I've got them both in a money-belt next to my skin. Wait for me in the studio."

He went into the room always reserved for him at the studio, and came quickly out again with the watch and map. The latter he handed to Peggy.

"Burn it up while I fix the watch, will you?" he asked.

The girl lighted a match and set fire to one corner of the little chart, dropping it when well ablaze on to a brass plate used as an ash tray, where the stout paper sluggishly resolved intself into ashes, the lines showing out from the chart the word "*Kapukalipelipe*" plain until the girl crumpled the wrinkled heap, and one clue to the treasure vanished as she brushed the remnants into the fireplace.

Meantime, Addams had dampened the stamp on a used and opened envelope he took from his pocket. This he allowed to soak until he was able to peel it off and carefully dry it.

"Give me your India ink, Jim," he said. "The waterproof kind. Thanks."

He sat down at a small table, putting the screen between him and the window.

He copied the figures from the watch-lid on to the back of the stamp, comparing them carefully.

165' 40" W
12' 20" N

"Now the mucilage, Jim."

He lightly regummed the stamp and replaced it exactly in its former position on the envelope, padding it with a blotter till it was firm.

"Now for the watch," he said, and, with the blade of his knife, erased the telltale figures from the lid. He handed the watch to Fellowes and put the letter back into his breast pocket.

"They'd puzzle a long time before they struck that," he said, "but I'll think up a better scheme yet."

Peggy Winton's eyes widened at the precaution.

"Don't expect to be held up, old chap, do you?" drawled her brother.

"After Henley's stunt at the window last night," answered Addams, "it's best to expect anything and be prepared for it. Now, I'm off. Good-by!"

It was snowing hard and persistently. From the front of the house the big archway of the Square not fifty yards away was invisible.

Peggy shivered as she opened the front door for Fellowes, clad in one of Addams's ulsters, ready to go to his room and pack and dispose of his few belongings.

"Won't you let me get you a taxi?" she asked.

"Bless you, miss, no!" he declared cheerily. "This is nothin' to the Arctic. In a fortnight we'll be wishing we could see some of this snow again."

She watched him plowing sturdily through the drifts, the falling snow closing him out from sight like a curtain, before she closed the door and went to find Selim. In the studio she could hear her brother singing in his light tenor:

"Fifteen men on a dead man's chest.
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil have done for the rest,
  Yo-ho and a bottle of r-r-rum!"

IT WAS late afternoon before Addams returned. Peggy, in the excitement of packing, had not noticed the time until it grew dark at a little after four. She went into the studio where her brother was delightedly burning up blue-prints and elevations.

"There goes that Court House competition drawing, Peggy," he said. "Watch it flare! That's where I've often wanted to send the whole stack of them—to blazes. I'm burning my bridges, like Archer. Good luck!"

"Shouldn't he be back by now?" she queried. "And surely Mr. Fellowes ought to be here. Maybe something's happened to him?"

"Shucks, no, Peggy! But the old boy is late, isn't he. If you like I'll run over. It's only a few blocks. Monroe Court on Macdougal Street, isn't it?"

He struggled into his ulster.

"Tell Selim to watch out for Henley," he said jestingly.

At the front door he met Addams.

"Anything up, old chap?" he asked, sensing the gravity of Addams's demeanor. "Trip all off? Pirate woke up and found it all a dream?"

"I wish he had," answered Addams grimly, "rather than this had happened. Come into the front room, Jim. Peggy in the studio? Good. No need to tell her all the details."

Winton's care-free features sobered.

"Henley?" he asked.

Addams nodded.

"Looks like it," he said. "Fellowes is dead."

Winton gave a low whistle.

"Have they got Henley?" he asked.

"No—nor likely to. It may not even have been murder. They caught me at my office at three o'clock from the tenth precinct police station. They had found a card of mine in Fellowes's room. He got there about eleven o'clock this morning, directly after leaving here, I suppose. He told his landlady, who is an Italian, that he was going to pack up to go away on a sea voyage and for her to come up later, as he'd have some things to give her as keepsakes.

"She heard him, off and on, singing to himself and moving about, till her youngsters came in from school and she got their meal ready for them. I imagine the children talking drowned any outside noise except that once she says she heard the sound of a man coming down-stairs—a man with a foot that dragged."

"Henley!" exclaimed Winton.

"Of course. She didn't think much of it—all kinds come and go in that kind of a lodging-house—and she didn't open the door to look because the halls were cold. After the children had gone again she went up to the room and found Fellowes on the floor, half propped against the bed, gasping.

"He managed to say, "Too late!" which she supposed to mean she was too late to find him. She called in the neighbors and they got him on the bed. When the ambulance came he was dead. Not a scratch on him, no sign of violence—heart failure. The doctor said it was a wonder he hadn't gone years before. The valves were rotten.

"The drawers were all emptied, so was his sea-chest, with the contents piled up in a heap on the floor. But, as she told the police he'd been packing to go away, they didn't think anything of that. They found a little money in his pocket, and his watch was on the bureau—*with the lid unscrewed*—but that didn't mean anything to them.

"The landlady, between the excitement and her lack of English, forgot about the lame man till after they'd gone and taken what was left of the poor old chap. She didn't really attach much importance to it and only remembered to tell it to me because I talked to her in Italian and she didn't have to worry over her words.

"I didn't suggest anything to her and I didn't volunteer any information to the police. I told the desk sergeant I was interested in the old man since I'd found him that time in Union Square—and that ended it as far as they're concerned. 'Heart failure,' they'll bring it in.

"There's no proof against Henley. It's likely he didn't lay a finger on the old man. Fellowes had left his door unlocked for the landlady, and the sheer sight of Henley may have brought on the shock.

"He wouldn't want us to raise a hue and cry after Henley without a chance to convict of either robbery or murder. What he'd want us to do, is to get after the treasure at once. I imagine Henley will go into hiding though. The less said about it the better. As it is, no one is likely to identify him with the story that came out in Chicago five years ago about his expedition.

"I suppose not," assented Jim. "Good thing, too. If the reporters scented a three-quarters-of-a-million mystery we'd have the town on us. Who's going to tell Peggy? She's quite fond of the old chap, already."

"So was I," said Addams. "I think you'd better tell her, old man, being her brother. Better just tell her it was heart failure."

So it was dry-eyed Peggy who met Archer at the dinner table and talked sorrowfully over the old man's death.

"I suppose he would think the curse was buried with him," she said. "Poor old man, he paid for his wrong. Sixty-five years of luck against him, his wife and children both gone. It hardly seems right to go without him."

"He would have wished it, Peggy," said Addams. "If he knows, I think he'll be glad that we are going ahead. And the sooner, the better. This chap Henley, when he realizes Fellowes is dead, as he will sooner or later, may give up the idea of finding the treasure, but—he may not."

"I hope so," said Peggy.

Selim entered with a tray on which was a dirty envelope.

"A verree small boy bring this just now," he said. "There was no name, but he say the number correct."

Addams, with a glance at the others for confirmation, opened the note. It was short, made up of printed characters, and occasional words evidently clipped from a newspaper and pasted on the cheap sheet of paper, as a precaution against the identity of the sender. He read it aloud:

> "I know you have what I want. You put in advertisement tomorrow *Herald* position of lat. and long. or look out for trouble. You know who sends this. H."

"Our friend Henley," commented Winton. "What are you going to do, Archer? Bluff him out?"

"I don't imagine that will be so easy," answered Addams, "though he's trying to run one on us. But we'll try. I'll put the advertisement in, all right, but if he follows the figures I give he'll never find the island."

"Good work."

"The hitch is that he'll probably be watching us, or have us watched. If we stay here he may think he's frightened us out. On the other hand, if he realizes we're off on a trip he'll trail us to check up, if he's got the cunning and persistence I'm giving him credit for."

"That's so," assented Winton. "What are you going to do about that?"

"We'll all meet separately at the Pennsylvania Station tomorrow morning. Train leaves at ten. I'll give you your tickets separately. I'll not stay here tonight. Leave the house at different times—and no baggage. We'll have to get along the best we can and get some stuff in San Francisco if we have time. It's close connections, and the overland trains are liable to be late in this snow."

"Oh, I say," objected Winton, who had carefully selected the contents for his one trunk with a view to making his usual dapper appearance aboard the steamer. "We can't go that way."

"Not a grip," said Addams decidedly. "Can you manage, Peggy?"

"Of course I can," she answered blithely. "As long as we have to."

"That's the answer," declared Addams. "Jim, you confounded dude, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Wait till we come back. You can flirt with all the pretty girls to your heart's content, and marry one of them if you want to, on the strength of your quarter of a million.

"That's so," retorted Winton, determined to score, as he thought regretfully of his well-fitting flannels. "You said you were going to do something of the sort yourself, didn't you?"

He watched his sister's flush and Addams's slight embarrassment with ill-concealed amusement.

"There's one thing I want to do, right away," said Addams, avoiding the issue. "Have you got any marking ink, Peggy?"

"Why I think so," she said wonderingly. "For linen, you mean? I'll go and look for it."

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAN IN THE WHEEL-CHAIR

THE first day or two of the voyage proved uneventful. They had reached San Francisco in time to get some clothes, much to Winton's satisfaction, whose slight but well-molded figure responded kindly to the ready-made outfit he secured.

The first afternoon found him basking in the smiles of a pretty girl, "making hay while the sun shone" as he lightly dubbed the flirtation entered into in shipboard *camaraderie* by both himself and his charmer of the moment.

Addams found the idle hours passed swiftly in the company of Peggy. All talk of the treasure was *tabooed* for safety's sake, but the excitement of the quest was alive in both of them and they drew closer in the mutual glamour of the venture.

There were no signs of Henley. They had made their individual ways to the train apparently unobserved and had noted nothing on the overland journey to arouse suspicion that they were being followed. The delay of getting their outfits for the sea trip had brought them almost last to the gangplank, but a quiet though close survey and mutual comparisons of the passengers revealed none but the ordinary run of travelers.

Only one person failed to appear, a man named Stevens, kept to his cabin by paralysis, they learned, and represented by his nurse, an austere woman of about fifty, in regulation uniform, non-communicative, attentive to nothing but her duties.

Selim, from his part of the ship, reported nothing that aroused suspicion, and their hopes of gaining the gold without interference mounted high.

On the evening of the third day, Addams, returning for a fresh supply of cigars to the cabin shared by Jim and himself, thought that he noticed some slight disarrangement of the things in the tray of the trunk he had bought at San Francisco.

Closer inspection failed to justify his suspicion. If the cabin had been searched an expert must have accomplished it. There was nothing definite upon which to base determination. The bedding of the two bunks was immaculately neat, the clothes in the trunk unwrinkled. Yet an evanescent suggestion persisted in Addams's mind that the carelessly recorded mental image of his last look at the state-room differed from the picture before him in some tiny detail, that, while it troubled, refused to be definitely recalled.

He went on deck, rejoining Peggy, luxuriant in a becushioned steamer-chair. He took the one next to hers, smoking his fragrant cigar thoughtfully.

"Seen Jim?" he asked.

"He's hidden in the friendly shadow with Miss Belmont," said Peggy. "He really thinks he's in earnest this time. But then, he always does. She's a charming girl, too. They're going to stay in Honolulu for some time. They've got a cottage on the beach at Waikiki and want me to join in all sorts of plans. Of course I didn't accept or refuse. I couldn't, without hinting at something mysterious in our own trip."

"You're a trump card, always, Peggy," said Addams.

"You'd better talk with Jim," she said. "He's liable to get overconfidential. He does, you know," she went on, "when he's in love, or thinks he is."

"Jim's all right," assured Addams, though making a mental note to once more warn that gentleman against carelessness.

Both approximately the same age, there was a vast difference between the friends.

In the old days, when Archer Addams played center at football, Winton was the volatile yell leader. At polo, with Addams playing back, a tower of strength for his team, certain of stroke, calm of judgment, playing the game every moment for all he was worth, Winton was Number One, a brilliant but erratic forward. With Addams at the wheel and skippering the yacht in race or cruise, Winton handled the jib sheet, and, between tacks, devoted himself to the general entertainment, especially if there was a sailor of the gentler sex aboard.

And yet, through his birthgift of the ability to draw and design, Jim Winton had made better weather of it so far in the commercial field than Addams. But there was no question as to who was the leader in times of stress.

"Peggy," said Addams, lowering his voice. "Have you noticed any disarrangement of your cabin, as if some one had made a careful search of it?"

"Why, I did, yesterday afternoon," she said, "after lunch. But I wasn't sure, so I said nothing about it."

"Ah! I've had the same fancy. Suppose you arrange something—some ribbons, say—in such a way they can't be disturbed without your knowing. Can you do that?"

"Easily. You think——"

She stopped as a figure passed them.

"I don't know anything except they'll find nothing for their pains. If Henley has traced us in spite of all, he must be on this ship to do him any good. Have you any idea what this mysterious passenger looks like?"

"He's a very old man, I believe."

"Well," said Addams, "I may be mistaken. In any case he'll not find out the position, the way we've disposed of it."

The pacing figure came back, a long coat covering it from collar to foot.

"It's the nurse," whispered Peggy as she passed. "What does Henley look like?"

"Tall and thin, with black hair and beard. Heavy eyebrows. The best he can do is to keep on following us if he *is* aboard and, if I can charter the right kind of a boat, we'll lead him a merry chase to the island. Here comes Jim."

The spark of a cigarette glowed as Winton and his companion, a vivacious brunette, came laughing aft.

"Come on down, moonies," said Winton. "This is concert night. Miss Belmont's going to sing."

"So are you," said the girl at his side.

"I am willing to go through my whole repertoire of parlor tricks like a good doggie at your command," said Winton, "providing the usual lump of sugar, or its equivalent, is forthcoming."

They passed on, chaffing. Addams and Peggy Winton followed after a few minutes. At the head of the staircase they heard the piano in the music salon break out into accompaniment, and Jim Winton's tenor caroling—

"Fifteen men on a dead man's chest,
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"

Adams shrugged his shoulder.

"He's irrepressible," he said.

"He ought to be more careful," said Peggy.

"Perhaps this is all getting on our nerves too much," said Addams. "We may be imagining everything without real cause. We're as bad as Shakespeare's guilty thief who 'fears each bush an officer.' I confess I thought the chief engineer was Henley the first time I saw him, and I was only relieved when I noticed he didn't limp. Let's join the crowd."

CHAPTER IX

SELIM FOLLOWS A TRAIL

IT WAS noon of the fifth day out from San Francisco. Diamond Head was already in sight and the passengers of the *Korea* were on deck, waiting to watch the unfolding of the panorama of Waikiki Beach with its villas and the harbor of Honolulu with the emerald, purple-shadowed mountains of Tantalus and the Pali-Gap beyond, backed by the ever-present masses of trade clouds.

"It's wonderfully beautiful," said Peggy Winton to Addams, as the *Korea* glided along the reef, where the peacock waters changed swiftly into the transparent chrysoprase of the lagoon. "I suppose our little island will look very different from all this."

"Yes," assented Addams, "I imagine it will. But I don't think you are going to see it, Peggy. Not unless I am satisfied we have shaken off Henley. The risk is too great. You won't miss so much. You see, we'll be sailing for several days through a sea-desert; and life on a small boat, such as we may have to put up with, is not too agreeable."

"Any one would think I had never been on a yacht before," pouted Peggy, looking particularly adorable, Addams thought, in white linen and spotless Panama set upon her well-shaped head, crowned with its curling masses of red gold. "I am almost inclined to think you are sorry I came."

"Honestly, Peggy," said Addams, "I'll be glad to have the trip over, that is, from here on. The fact that we've seen nothing of Henley so far, doesn't convince me that we've got rid of him. The man is a persistent type and he's got a big stake to play for. Frankly, I'm nervous."

"On my account?"

Addams looked over the rail. They were around the bell-buoy now, heading for the harbor. The white houses on shore and clustering up to the slopes of Punchbowl crater, in their setting of green palms and tropical foliage, gave him an excuse. He was nervous, and on Peggy's account. He had been in love with Peggy Winton for seven years, since she was eighteen and he twenty-three.

The mutual loss of fortune, which he considered due to bad judgment, at least, on the part of his own well-loved father, had set a barrier between them. Or rather he had set it up as a barrier, believing that he should not attempt to link his own poor fortunes to those, no better, of the girl. He did not attempt to deny that he had entirely concealed his love. He had even hoped, in confident moments, that it was returned. The sudden opportunity of a bid for fortune, raised by his meeting with Fellowes, opened up to him, if success crowned their efforts, at least an opportunity for avowal on the standing that he felt a man should occupy, the ability to maintain a woman in the state that she was accustomed to, or had a right to demand.

Jim Winton was frankly out for the money, to relieve him from the commercial grind. His interest in his pretty fellow passenger could not be taken too seriously. For Addams, the gold was a secondary consideration, merely the key of a gateway that had long barred the path to the heart of his sweetheart. Peggy's interest, he trusted, was coincident with his own. It was no wonder, he thought, that he was nervous.

The death of Fellowes had brought a grim reality into the affair that Addams could not shake off. The story of the continuous ill fortune that had hovered over the old man's life for sixty-five years to the moment, when, with a happy if temporary haven in sight, he was suddenly cut down, seemed to presage the still present existence of the curse on the looted gold.

There was nothing superstitious about Addams, healthy and vigorous as he was. The thought of disaster seemed absurd on this morning of tropic sunshine, yet it was persistent, imminent. They had left New York on schedule without hearing from the man with the dragging foot, they had seen nothing of him on the train trip across the continent, it appeared impossible that he could be on even terms with them, and yet——

Addams shook his broad shoulders and accused himself of being morbid.

Peggy Winton had moved forward and was tossing nickels to the swimming boys who surrounded the sides of the vessel. She smiled at him as he came up.

"I'm all out of small change, Archer. Lend me some dimes. There's one duck of a boy——"

She broke off as a wheel-chair came up silently on its rubber tires, propelled by the taciturn, grim-visaged nurse. Addams surveyed its occupant keenly.

The man lay heavily on his cushions, gloved hands limp and seemingly lifeless on his knees. Despite the heat a steamer-rug was wrapped about his knees and above a corpulent stomach. His face was very pale and clean-shaven; deep shadows under the eyes were accentuated by amber-tinted glasses, through which he gazed vacantly ahead. Beneath a Panama hat, the only concession to the climate, its broad brims shading the ghastly face, a straggling fringe of gray hair showed. His eyebrows were slight, straggly tufts of white above the wide-rimmed glasses.

"Not much like Henley," Addams thought with sudden relief.

He lifted his eyes to the face of the nurse. The imperturbable mask of her face seemed to him to shift for an instant, in her dark eyes something that watched appeared to leap to the surface for a second and then hide again, swift as the movement of a camera-shutter.

The wheel-chair moved on conveniently close to the gangway. Addams beckoned Selim to one side with a look.

"I want you to follow that man in the chair, Selim," he said quietly. "Find out where he stops, make sure he's staying there, then come up to us at the Royal Hotel. I'll look after the baggage."

The Arab's eyes lit with intelligence and he unobtrusively moved off.

"There's a good man, Peggy," he said. "That boy Selim of yours."

"He's a jewel," she answered. "I suppose you'll want to take him on the trip."

Winton came up with Miss Belmont.

"All ready for shore?" he asked. "Where do we stop, Archer?"

"The Royal. I cabled. It's in town and they have separate cottages. We've got one to ourselves."

"Miss Belmont's going to the Moana, out at the beach," said Jim. "If you don't need me particularly this afternoon, Archer, Miss Belmont has promised to initiate me into the noble art of surf riding."

Addams gave him a swift glance. The sooner the fascinating Miss Belmont was left in the background, he thought, and the sooner they got to sea again, the more he would be able to realize on whatever use Winton was going to be to the expedition. But it was no part of his plans to antagonize the Belmonts, with whom he hoped to leave Peggy during the trip to the island.

"Go ahead," he said. "I wish I could join you, but I'm going to be busy all afternoon. We'll see you at dinner."

"Miss Belmont turned to Peggy Winton.

"You'll come, won't you?" she asked.

"I'd love to," answered Peggy with an indignant look at her brother, which slid off him like mercury from a slanting board. "But I've got shopping that simply has to be done."

On the wharf, among the crowd of friends and onlookers, Addams noticed a man who met the man in the wheel-chair and seemed taken aback at his reception. Addams was too far away to catch the words, but the sound of the invalid's voice was like a rasp as he answered the greeting. The man was a hulking figure in ill-fitting serge, his face repulsive in its low type, with the broken nose and shattered ears that mark the prize-fighter.

He seemed to protest, but, at another sharp sentence from the paralytic, turned and walked beside the chair in silence.

"So he was expected," thought Addams. "I don't think much of the reception committee. He seemed to be unwelcome, to say the least of it."

As the chair moved off he caught sight of Selim, gliding like a shadow in its wake, undistinguishable among the many Hawaiians who had thronged to see the steamer come in, according to their idle custom.

CHAPTER X

THE SECRET OF THE CAVES

AFTER dinner, at which Winton displayed a quaint, emotional mixture of being at the same time ashamed of himself for leaving Addams in the lurch and pleased at how he had spent the afternoon, the three adjourned to one of the big semicircular *lanais* (verandas) of the hotel for a moment.

"Let's go over to the cottage," said Addams.

They walked from the main building by paths bordered with hibiscus and stately royal palms to their bungalow, facing a quiet street, and sat on their vine-clad *lanai*, gorgeous with the orange trumpets of the huapla vine. The perfume of *ihlang-ihlang* and *plumaria* was heavy on the air; the brilliant moonlight spread the lawns with an arabesque of light and shade, unshifting in the calm, breezeless night.

"'Where every prospect pleases and only man is vile,'" quoted Winton, lighting his cigarette. "'Man,' standing for Henley. I've got a hunch he's not out of the running somehow."

"That's the way I feel about it," declared Peggy. "I know men laugh at a woman's instinct, but, like Jim, I've got what he calls a 'hunch.' So has Selim. He told me this morning that the omens were bad and we should not start on our trip tomorrow at all events. I wonder where he is."

"I sent him on an errand," said Addams. "You two needn't be ashamed of your hunches. I had one too. That nurse's eyes were alive for the first time since we started, when she passed us wheeling that chair this morning. I sent Selim to trail them and find out definitely where they were stopping. He should be back by now."

"You don't think that helpless old doodlebug was Henley, do you?" asked Jim.

"I don't know, Jim," Addams answered. "It didn't look much like him, but they met a rough-looking customer who didn't fit in with the outfit, and who, if I'm not mistaken, was called down by the man in the chair for showing up at all. There was something in that woman's eyes—but we'll know more when Selim shows up.

"Now then," he went on, "I'm going

down to Pearl Harbor tomorrow by train to see if I can charter one of the inter-island schooners. They are slow tubs, but all the yachts seem to be in commission. These chaps sail all the year 'round. There's a regatta on next week and they're all entered."

"Why not?" said Jim. "You'd hardly think this was the middle of January, would you? Want me to come with you? I want to do my share, you know," he said apologetically for his afternoon's dereliction.

"No," said Addams, "I think not. I've dug up a ship's chandler who'll fix us up in twelve hours from order, any time of day or night, and he's working on the list I gave him. But it's up to you tomorrow, Jim, to scare up two sailors, or three if you can get them. Natives preferably. I want men who know a jib from a topsail. Tell them it's a pleasure trip. That's your job."

"I'll get them if I have to shanghai them," answered Winton.

"Want to come with me to Pearl Harbor, Peggy?" asked Addams. "Have you got your shopping done?"

"Everything," she answered. "I'm ready to sail at a moment's notice. You're not going to leave me behind, are you?"

"I may be making mountains out of molehills," said Addams. "The thing for us to do is to drive ahead. You'll go with me tomorrow, Peggy?"

"Gladly. Since you won't promise to let me go with you, I suppose I had better tell you the secret of the caves," said Peggy. "Jim, you're not supposed to hear this. It was only to be told to Archer, according to poor Mr. Fellowes's instructions."

"I'm dismissed, am I?" said Jim. "Oh, very well."

He rose and strolled away toward the hotel, glad at his chance of release, intent upon telephoning to the Moana Hotel to see if the vivacious lady who had captured his fancy was disengaged.

"Now, Sir Masterful," said Peggy, "I think you are nothing less than mean to despoil me of my share in the real adventure, but, as the promoter and leader of the expedition, I suppose I must temporarily bow to your authority. Though, mind you, I have not promised to stay willingly."

"Agreed," said Addams. "We'll argue it out when we get a boat and arrive at some conclusion about Henley."

"Well, then," she said, "there are six caves, all close together. The gold is in the third, counting from the cape."

She spoke softly and Addams bent his head close to listen. The moonlight shone on her face, he could feel her breath on his cheek, and at its soft suggestion his heart beat faster as she went on in familiar confidence.

"We are to look for a group of hieroglyphics. There's a carving of a big fish, then a canoe and a group of five men. Under this is a ring. Poor Fellowes said it probably meant the killing of a whale or a shark by five men who afterwards went 'round the island before they left in their boat. It's the only carving of a fish in any of the caves and it's somewhere on the right-hand wall. Is that plain?"

"Perfectly."

"Archer," she went on after a moment, "I feel I ought to apologize for Jim, and myself, too, for that matter."

"Why?"

"Both of us, in your generosity, are sharing equally with you. There was no necessity for it. I'm a girl and you don't have to take me with you. And Jim's not doing his share."

"That's nonsense, Peggy!" said Addams. "It isn't because I don't want you that I suggest your staying behind in Honolulu. As for Jim, he's almost as much my brother as he is yours. That is——"

He stopped, checking the thoughts that clamored to be put into words.

"Yes, I suppose he is." Peggy's tone had changed. There was mischief in it now. "So, Brother Archer, take Sister Peggy back to listen to the orchestra. They are going to dance later. See that you perform your fraternal duties, sir, and provide me with plenty of partners."

CHAPTER XI

THE SCHOONER *WAVECREST*

"NO SIR!" said the stolid German who did odd jobs for the Pearl Harbor clubhouse of the Honolulu Yacht Club. "You can't get no schooner. Dere iss de *Ahimanu* what iss loading firewood, put she won't pe in for a week, und dere iss de *Lei Lehua*, put she changed charters yesterday."

"Somebody buy her yesterday?" asked Addams sharply.

"Sure did they puy her," said Schwartz. "A man who iss goin' to use her for carrying sheeps ofer to his ranch on Lanai. You vas too late, already."

"Who was the buyer?" asked Addams. "Maybe I can charter her from him for a week or two."

"I should know his name?" answered the German. "Iss it my pusiness? I don't own de poat."

"Then you don't know where I could get a sloop or a small schooner?" asked Addams almost despairingly. He seemed to have come to the end of a blind alley. "I'll pay well for it."

The man's little eyes gleamed, but he spread out his hands slowly.

"I could use de money," he said. "Put—der ain't no poat."

If Addams had known the ancient and unsavory reputation of Schwartz, gained in the days when illicit dealers slipped through the tortuous reef into Pearl Harbor under cover of darkness at the signal of the old boatman, he might have distrusted the slow smile that broke through the dirty features as the German turned away, muttering to himself:

"Sheep to Lanai. Dot vas a gut one! *Dumkopf!* He schwallowed it like a mullet. I charge dot feller Henley extry for dot."

"Well, Peggy," said Addams, "we'll have to buy a *sampan* or hire a steamer, I guess. I suppose I could persuade one of those yacht-owners, but I'd have to take him into the secret of the trip, and I hate to do that. It might leak out, and, aside from the risk of Henley, we've got no mortgage on the island or the treasure either. Some one might beat us out."

"There's a little cove over here," said Peggy, "with some private villas. I walked over while you were talking to that man. And there's a schooner at anchor. It's up for the season, I'm sure; the sails have all been stripped and the deck is covered with canvas."

"Let's go over and take a look at it," said Addams. "It's a case of any ship in a storm. We can go down trying."

The schooner, a trim, modern, overhung craft of about fifty feet waterline, was at anchor off a small wharf running out from the lawn that sloped from a somewhat pretentious bungalow to the water. The blinds were down, but smoke came from a chimney.

"Let's go in," suggested Addams. "If we could get her we'd be fixed. She's a beauty."

A ring at the front door brought no response, and they walked around to the back. A contented-looking Chinaman was scaling fish on the porch.

"Mornin'!" he said. "You wan' speak Misty Steven? He no home. He go San Francisco—no come back one, two, mebbe flee week."

A reflective light came into Addams's eyes.

"You savvy Mr. Stevens's first name," he asked. "You know his initials?"

"Sure. He name Josiah P."

Addams's face was wreathed in smiles. "It's 'Tub' Stevens, Peggy," he said. "Old Tub who went to Harvard with me. I knew he lived in Honolulu, but I had forgotten it."

He turned to the Chinaman.

"Your master a fat man?" He indicated a generous stomach with his hands.

The smiling Chinaman nodded.

"Plenty fat," he said. "He got one mark here." He touched his forehead. "He your flen'?"

"I should say he was!" exclaimed Addams. "He got that scar the night of the freshman rush. He was knocked flat and some one kicked him in the 'scrim.' I stood over him till he got up. We were good friends. Luck's with us, Peggy. He'll lend me anything he owns."

"But he's in San Francisco!"

"The cable's working. You know his San Francisco address?" he asked the Oriental.

"Palace Hotel, I think—mebbe." The Chinaman's friendly interest had been accentuated by the pressure in his palm of a five-dollar bill. "He got office in Honolulu. King Stleet. There they sabby."

"Fine. Let's go down on the wharf, Peggy." He turned to the Chinaman. "Any way of getting off to the yacht?" he asked. "I'd like to have a look at her."

The Chinaman went with them and pointed out a small boat moored at the end of the little pier.

Addams helped Peggy into the dingey and they rowed off and about the schooner.

"She'll sail rings 'round any woodschooner!" exclaimed Addams as they reached the pier again. "Thank you, John."

"That all right, thank you. My name, he Ah Sing," replied the man, returning to his fish.

As the train, running back to Honolulu, skirted the shore of the eastern arm of the Pearl locks, they saw a dingy schooner unloading wood, moored to a wharf. The mainsail hung down at the peak. On it was a big patch. The broad stern showed the name, *Lei Lehua*, in tarnished gilt lettering.

"That's the tub we might have got," said Addams. "That schooner of Stevens's will go by her like a steamer."

"What was the name of Mr. Stevens's yacht?" asked Peggy. "I didn't notice."

"The *Wavecrest*. I'll put you in a taxi for the hotel, Peggy, if you don't mind, while I scout up the office. I hope Jim got the sailors. We'll rig the *Wavecrest* and sail up to Honolulu and load there. We should get away tomorrow night, if I can get him by cable."

Addams reached the hotel at the end of the afternoon."

"I got the cable rushed," he said triumphantly. "Here's the answer."

Winton and his sister bent over the pink slip.

"*Wavecrest* yours," it read. "Take Ah Sing."

"That's something like a pal," said Jim with enthusiasm. "I think I've got the men, Archer. Got one sure. We're to meet him tonight on the water-front at a sailor's hang-out called the "Fore and Aft." He'll have his mate with him."

"Native?"

"No. Portuguese, named Silva. Claims to be an able seaman. Says he's worked on yachts, and seems to know what he's talking about."

CHAPTER XII

AT THE SIGN OF THE "FORE-AND-AFT"

THE Fore-and-Aft saloon was on the Honolulu water-front, a resort conducted by a pair of partners named Burke and Jewett, reviled in many a port for their success in shanghaiing sailors and, occasionally, when the supply of the genuine article was scarce, landsmen. They were tough customers, able to handle themselves in a scrimmage, and their tactics had led to many a broad hint from the Territorial police that things could no longer be run as they used to be under the monarchy.

So Burke and Jewett opened the Fore-and-Aft and, ostensibly, mended their ways. The saloon was unique and popular. The big room held two bars ranged in circular fashion about stout spars that ran from floor to ceiling in imitation of masts. One of these bars was known as the "Fore," the other as the "Aft," or, sometimes, the "Main."

Set about the room were little tables for those who preferred them. The place was always filled from dusk to closing time with the flotsam and jetsam of the water-front, sailors and stevedores spending their newly earned wages, men down to the price of their last drink, and hangers-on—beachcombers—sneaking up to the lunch counters with a furtive eye on Burke or Jewett, who usually lounged by the circular bars.

There were no women allowed; and the saloon, save for the loud talk, might fairly be considered orderly. Rough-houses occurred now and then at the Fore-and-Aft in the regular routine of business, but to the casual eye the place held no hint of being anything but what it professed to be.

As Addams and Winton entered, an orchestrion was blaring out a popular dance tune, some men were clumsily dancing with each other like trained bears, and the place was blue with smoke. Some fifty men were at the tables and about the bars. The counter of the "Aft," at the back of the saloon, was comparatively deserted and to this they made their way, Winton keeping a lookout for his man, Silva. No one seemed to pay particular attention to them, and they ordered a glass apiece of the resinous beer for "the good of the house."

Addams touched Winton's elbow.

"There's that rough-neck acquaintance of our invalid friend," he said. "The one who met him at the wharf. Over at the other bar. He's with his own crowd, all right. They're a nice-looking lot of uncaged jail-birds."

Winton agreed with him. The half-dozen of hulking, ill-kempt men returned his glance, one of them saying something that raised a general laugh. A broad-shouldered man, better dressed than the rest, a big diamond horseshoe in his tie, wearing an air of authority, left the group and strolled over to Addams and Winton.

"Lookin' for any one in special, gents?" he asked. "Or jest sight-seein'? My name's Burke. I'm one of the owners."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Burke," replied Winton untruthfully. "You'll join us? I was looking for a man by the name of Silva. He said he'd meet me here with a friend of his. We want to hire them. Perhaps they'll ask for me—I gave them my card. My name's Winton."

"Silva's a common name along the waterfront," said Burke affably. "I reckon your man'll be along soon. Make yourselves at home."

The crowd of men from the other bar, with the broken-nosed man among them, came across and started talking familiarly to Burke, crowding Addams and Winton carelessly as they pushed up to the circle. One of them jostled Winton, who flushed angrily. Addams trod lightly on his foot and edged around the bar.

"Don't start anything, Jim," he said quietly. "I don't like the look of this place. Let's go over to one of the tables.

"As they did so the other men left the counter and deliberately brushed them, treading on their feet.

"Git outa my way, you —— dude," said one of them, thrusting Winton aside.

The rude shock and the impudence of the man who set his inflamed face close enough for Winton to catch the whisky-laden breath, infuriated the latter, who was no coward, beyond control. He swung viciously, snapping his right to the jaw and sending his man staggering backwards.

INSTANTLY, as at a signal, the place was in an uproar. Men at the tables jumped to their feet cursing, and the broken-nosed man with his immediate companions advanced threateningly upon the two friends who set their backs to the bar. Addams coolly tossed his untasted beer in the face of one of them and followed it up with a blow that sent him to the floor.

"Make for the door, Jim," said Addams quietly. "Punch the fellow in front of you; keep punching and keep moving."

It was sound advice. The fight had become a free-for-all and men were striking indiscriminately at the nearest to them. But the six who had started the trouble had become a dozen, then a score, all apparently determined to wreak vengeance upon the strangers.

It began to look like disaster. Addams and Winton were forced slowly to retreat. Presently they felt the back wall against their shoulders. Addams picked up a chair and swung it about him. Winton, beside him, was fighting stubbornly.

Then the broad-shouldered figure of Burke appeared, raging through the crowd. The two masts had been fitted up to approximate the real thing as closely as possible, and Addams had noticed a ring of belaying-pins set in a rail about each of them. That these were realities was proved by the way Burke, backed by two husky bartenders, was handling his.

He fought his way to the wall.

"This is a bad mess," he said to Addams. "They think you're dudes an' they're sore at your buttin' in. There's the back door just to the right of you. Better slip out quick. I'll keep 'em back till you make your getaway."

He was swinging viciously at the crowd which dodged the blows of the hardwood belaying-pin.

"Come on, Jim," panted Addams. "This way."

He found the door and opened it. The fresh, salty air flowed into the stale, smoke-burdened atmosphere. The next moment they had slipped through and slammed the door behind them.

They found themselves in an alley, heavy in shadow. As they turned, uncertain of their direction, a dozen dark forms seemed to spring out of walls and fences and they were borne down, struggling under the weight of their opponents.

CHAPTER XIII

HENLEY AND CO.

ADDAMS regained consciousness on a damp floor of dirt. He felt his head which was sticky.

"I thought some one hit me a crack," he said to himself. "Jim!"

There was no answer, though he called again and again. The place was absolutely dark. There was a strange smell of spices and the acrid tang of something like incense. He thought he could hear voices murmuring close by and got to his feet, groping towards the sound. He hit his wounded head against a beam and stopped, confused with the sharp pain.

A square of orange light suddenly appeared in the blackness, barred across with a grille. A head showed, silhouetted against the brightness.

Addams went cautiously toward the light, trying to make out the features of the person beyond the grille of stout iron bars that, with the shutter outside that had just been opened, formed the upper part of a heavy door.

"Come to your senses, have you?" asked a voice that he seemed to have heard before. "That's good. You'll need 'em!"

"Where am I?" demanded Addams. "And who are you?"

The man chuckled.

"You're in the cellar of a Chinese hang-out," he said. "And your partner's fixed the same way. Twenty foot under ground you are. You an' me's goin' to have a little talk. As to who I am, take a look. You've seen me before, more'n once, though you may not recognize me."

He held up the lantern, which had illumined the grille, close to the bars, disclosing the face of a clean-shaven man, with black hair cropped close to his face. Despite the absence of the gray wig and the amber glasses, Addams saw the resemblance to the man in the wheel-chair.

"Ah, Henley," he said, drawing at a venture.

The man's face showed disappointment. Then he laughed, showing uneven, discolored teeth.

"You're smart, you are," he said with a grudging admiration. "But it was only a guess, if it was a good un. You didn't tumble to me aboard the steamer, for all your foxiness."

"I suppose you know," bluffed Addams, "that you're wanted in New York for murder?"

The man snarled.

"I didn't murder Fellowes, if that's what you mean," he said. "He was scared to death before I laid a finger on him, because he knew what I'd come after. Something that belonged to me. Something I'm going to get, Mr. Addams, for all your smartness. And you don't want to forget that New York's a long way off from here. It's you that's in a tight place now, not me.

"I thought something was up the night you took Fellowes 'round to your place," he went on, "playing charity to the old thief, so as to get the information that belongs to me, by rights."

"Go on," said Addams, who had found a bale of goods near the door and established himself there. "You mean the gold your father stole and committed murder for."

"I'll show you what I mean," said Henley. "I've got you where I want you now, and here you stay till you come through. Oh, you're a fox, with your fake position in the *Herald* and stowin' away the right figgers where they can't be found! I'll hand it to you. We searched your cabin thorough, and your girl's, too. We've been all through your clothes and your pal's while you was both out of your senses just now, but you're goin' to tell 'em to me before you get out of here.

"I'm a fox, too," he went on, his voice thickening in anger at Addams's immobility and silence. "I thought maybe you wouldn't give me the straight dope in the *Herald*, and I had you tagged all the time. I ain't alone in this. When Fellowes croaked, I ducked, but I knew every move you made. I know when you left for San Francisco and then I was sure of three things: first that you'd tried to bamboozle me; second, you had got the real dope from Fellowes; third, you was goin' after the gold yourselves.

"I followed on the next train west from Philadelphia. I wired to San Francisco, and when I got there I knew all 'bout you—where you registered and what steamer you was goin' on. When you was shopping I had a pal outside, watchin'. You might be lookin' out for a lame man with a beard, so I got my sister who's been an actress and a good one, to fix me a make-up—a wig, some grease paint, a close shave and some padding—an' play nurse to a poor paralytic who couldn't leave his cabin except in a wheel-chair.

"I know every move you've made," continued Henley. "I knew the gold was on an island somewhere in the Pacific. That fool Fellowes give that much out when he tried to get up an expedition and leave me out of it. It's somewhere not far from here, that's a cinch, or you wouldn't be dickerin' 'round the yacht club an' the water-front for a small craft.

"You see, I lived here once, Mr. Addams, and you can't turn a trick here that I ain't on to. And you couldn't get a yacht, could you? I could have told you that and saved you the trouble. You was just a day late at Pearl Harbor to get the *Lei Lehua*, too. Why? Because me and Schwartz are old pals. We've worked together. His brother-in-law owns the *Lei Lehua* and you had no more chance of gettin' her than you had of flyin'. And she's the only craft that's handy. And I've got her. Not for carryin' sheep to Lanai, neither."

"You might as well use her that way," said Addams. "I don't see what other good she'll be to you."

"Oh, you don't, don't you? Well, I'll tell you. I'm going to load her with gold, Mr. Addams, and you're goin' to tell me where to get it."

"Am I?"

"Yes, you are. You'll stay here, where nobody's going to look for you, till you come through with that latitude and longitude. And you needn't try to stall with the wrong figures. I'm going to get them from you and I'm going to get them from your pal, and if they don't tally you'll both stay here till they do. And you won't be getting fat doing it, either."

"You don't suppose my friends here—and I've got them, Henley—" said Addams evenly, "are going to let me drop out of sight, do you? You're playing a dangerous game."

"Yah!" Henley sneered through the bars. "That's just what you have done—dropped out of sight. You're two floors under the ground. There ain't more than a dozen white men, and they don't include the police, who know anything about it. You think it over, Mr. Addams! I want them figures and I'm going to get 'em!"

He turned his head at the sound of a low whistle.

"All right, I'm coming," he called. "That's your pal, come to his senses; I'm off for a little talk with him. Maybe I'll get some figures to bring back. Then you can tell me yours. But they've got to tally, see? If they do I'm going to give myself a few days' start, according to the distance, and then you'll get back to your girl again. If I don't get them you can stay here till you rot!"

THE whistle sounded again and Henley vanished. Addams could hear his lame foot halting along a passageway and up an uncovered flight of stairs.

He pressed his face against the grille. He could see across the passage into another room, the door of which was partly open. It was dimly lighted and on the one wall grotesque shadows wavered. Through the door came an acrid tang, the smell of cooking opium.

He went back to his bale to think it out, feeling for matches and cigars.

Everything had been taken from his clothes to the tiniest scrap of paper. Fortunately he had left most of his money in the hotel safe and persuaded Winton to do the same. Despite his predicament, he chuckled at the thought of Henley's chagrin after searching, probably in the person of his sister, first the cabins, and now the persons of himself and Jim, for the figures showing the position of the treasure island. Their hunting fingers must have passed over them a dozen times without being conscious of their existence.

Henley seemed to have set his plans very nicely: Silva, the fake Portuguese sailor, the row in the Fore-and-Aft, and Burke's apparent kindness in slipping them out of the back door into the very arms of their enemies, done so as not to incriminate Burke, who could profess ignorance of anything happening off his premises. The man was not only determined but clever, and evidently had a crowd of his own kind with him. The situation was serious. He felt sure of Jim, who, for all his surface frivolity, was stanch in times of stress, and resolved, in any event, not to give up the position of the island.

Peggy—whom Henley had called his "girl"—his heart warmed to the word—was his chief worry. She would be alarmed, of course. She had money, and Selim to look out for her, besides the Belmonts to advise and protect her, but in her anxiety she was almost certain to call in the authorities. And, whether he and Jim were found immediately or not, the story of the gold would become public and they would find it almost impossible to carry out their plans.

They would be marked for the rest of their existence until the affair was cleared up, which might not be in a fashion entirely to their profit. Governments might intervene under the treasure-trove law. Private ownership to the island might be assumed and even proven.

He was not particularly afraid of Henley doing anything desperate with himself or Jim. He decided to play the game of delay for a while. Peggy was not expecting necessarily to see them that night. She need not be alarmed until nine or ten the next morning.

He wondered what the time was. Then he groped his way about to discover some way out of the cellar, bumping into beams and over bales. The floor seemed to offer the only chance. It was of dirt, but any idea of digging a tunnel to the street was palpably absurd. He did not even know its direction. As for the walls, they were of hard brick. Consignments of strong-smelling Oriental goods were piled up on all sides.

He resumed his seat on the bale. The thought came to him that he might hide himself among the goods in the hope of some one coming in at last, and take a desperate chance at mastering them and fighting his way out. This idea he perforce set aside as impractical, though he constantly cast about for some way out of the dilemma.

There was the *Wavecrest* at Pearl Harbor waiting for them. Perhaps he could compromise with Henley for a share of the loot, offering to wait behind, and then outstrip him with the *Wavecrest*. It was evident that Henley knew nothing of his having secured the schooner.

A babble of voices aroused him and he went to the grating. Some Chinese were entering the room with the partly open door, across the passage. It was of little use appealing to the opium smokers. More than likely they would fail to understand him, if they were not in league with Henley.

Presently he heard the dragging footsteps coming back. Others, light but firm, followed it.

The face of Henley came to the grating.

"Well," said Henley, "you may as well come through. Your pal says he will, if you will."

Addams laughed.

"Better leave those tactics to the police. I'm not going to tell you."

"We might try the third degree yet—" said Henley.

"Pardon," said a suave, cultured voice. "Your tactics are somewhat crude, Henley, my friend. Open the door."

Henley demurred. The voice repeated the sentence coldly, in a tone as impersonal as the tap of a hammer on steel, a ring of authority in it, a far-off suggestion of an accent, or rather a too perfect precision of vowels and syllables.

"Open the door, you blundering fool. Are you afraid of an unarmed man? Do not try to attempt a sally, Mr. Addams. It will be useless, I assure you."

There was the sound of the removal of a heavy bar and the door swung open. On the instant the flash of an electric torch was focused on Addams, resting on his face, dazzling him even as he saw by the light of Henley's lantern the dark blue gleam of two automatics in nervous hands.

"SIT down, Mr. Addams," said the suave voice. "There's a bale conveniently behind you. Shut the door, Henley."

Addams obeyed. The glare of the torch was shut off. As his pupils dilated once again in the half-light of the lantern, he saw his visitors before him

Beside Henley stood the figure of a Chinaman, sleek, inclined to stoutness, with the air and attire of a prosperous merchant of high rank. His clothes were of thick brocade in quiet design of dull and glossy black silks. The skull-cap that crowned his bland smooth face, that was more like ivory than flesh and blood, was topped with a coral button. Once, from a finger on the hand that held the automatic, shot a brief dazzle of prismatic sparks as a magnificent diamond flashed out its fire in answer to a movement of the lantern Henley held.

The face challenged Addams's attention. Plump, creaseless, smug, emotionless, it revealed nothing, suggested all things. It was a mask that neither jest nor murder could change. But, between the smooth, sleepy lids, eyes as hard-lustered as polished marble, but ineffably alive, showed the vitality that lay beneath the placid physiognomy. They looked at Addams with the impersonal interest of a vivisectionist surveying a helpless victim, purposeful, implacable.

He spoke, and his voice had lost its metallic ring for a low, smooth-purring quality.

"Our friend here, Mr. Henley," he said, "being lacking in many things that are needful to successfully carry out his enterprise, has appealed to me. He has been very clumsy; he is still inclined to be. You will find, Mr. Addams, if you persist in being obstinate, that we are well equipped in both imagination and practise to persuade you to give up any idea of securing this gold. I can not even suggest a compromise with you. The amount is too small for division greater than already arranged."

He paused to mark the effect of his words.

"I assure you in all sincerity," he went on, the purring voice covering a sinister, insistent menace, "that you will find it very much to your advantage and to that of your friend, who is in the same helpless, unfortunate predicament as yourself, to forego any hallucinations as to your interest in the treasure.

"There will be nothing clumsy, I assure you. The Orient, as you may have read, perhaps seen, Mr. Addams, has reduced the profession of punishment and coercion to a fine art. I trust we shall not have to exercise it unduly. I have come frankly to deal with you as one head of an expedition to another."

Henley let out a growl that subsided promptly as the Chinaman turned the threat of his cold eyes upon him.

"Your friend, Mr. Winton," went on the quiet voice, "asserts that he does not know the needed figures of latitude and longitude. You do! It will be necessary to secure them from you and compare them with figures given by some other responsible party of your organization.

He paused. Addams faced him steadily.

"I am not going to tell you," he said.

"I shall give you a minute," rejoined the Oriental imperturbably. "Use it to balance the value of liberty and your present excellent physical condition against the sum of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. My own valuation is largely on the side of the money, in quite a heavy preponderance."

He went to the grille and called across the passage in Oriental sing-song. There was the scuffling of soft shoes and four Chinese entered the cellar.

Addams, his muscles tense, kept silence. The newcomers shifted into the shadows.

Suddenly the torch flared out into his face again and he was fighting furiously in a mêlée of entwining legs and arms that pulled him down at last, writhing, struggling on the floor, conscious all the time of the High Chinaman's impassive face and idly curious eyes, watching the certain outcome of the struggle.

Conquered at last, his wrists bound behind him, his ankles cross-tied, Addams found himself seated on his bale held by the four Chinamen, all of them breathing heavily. He knew by the resistance to a few hard blows he had sent home from fists and knees and elbows, that some of them were not entirely uninjured, and he derived a grim satisfaction from the thought.

At the command of the leader he was jerked roughly to his feet. A rope was run through a hook in the ceiling and attached to the thongs that bit into his wrists. With this hauled taut till his shoulder blades ground in their sockets, two of the men lifted him by the hips, placing him on a little platform of superimposed boards an inch in thickness, a foot in total height. The slack of the rope was taken up once more and its end fastened securely to a second hook projecting from the wall. Then, at a word from their chief, the four coolies withdrew.

"Now," said the Chinaman. "As I promised—nothing clumsy. The pain is exquisite, but there are no marks, no disfigurements, no blood. The dislocation can always be reduced if a satisfactory decision is arrived at in time. The figures, Mr. Addams."

Addams, the pain of the straining muscles already bringing beads of sweat to his forehead, disdained to answer.

The Chinaman flicked an inquiring torch-ray at his face.

"No?" he said. "Henley, take away one of those boards. Quickly, at a level."

The drop of an inch sent a wave of agony through Addams. He sunk his teeth in his lower lip to stop an involuntary groan.

"Once more, Henley," said the suave voice presently.

The sickening jar came again. The blood rushed to the tortured man's forehead and his brain seemed congested. Then the biting pain cleared it.

"Well?" asked the voice of velvet.

The cracking lips parted in an inarticulate "No." Henley dragged out another plank. Addams felt his muscles and sinews tearing away. His brow was wet, dripping with moisture. The torchlight, full on his face, faded suddenly as he fainted.

When he returned to consciousness he was in the same position, racked with pain, though the boards had been replaced. Henley had gone.

"We are going to leave you," said the Chinaman. "It will not be comfortable, but that is your fault. I am sorry you have been so stubborn. Once more, will you tell?"

Addams shook his head. The movement wrenched him till his features twitched.

"I shall slacken the rope a trifle," said his torturer. "If you keep very still you can think better. There are other ways of finding what we want. I may need you presently for comparison. *Au revoir.*"

He went out, barring the door after him and closing the shutter of the grille.

Addams, alone in the darkness, half suspended, half standing, gave vent to his bitterness of spirit and the agony he had fought back in a groan.

The grille showed once more in the orange square of light. A chuckle sounded.

"I was waitin' for that," said Henley, as his face showed darkly at the grille. "If I had my way I'd get it out of you if I had to cut it out!" he exploded savagely. "Comin'," he answered in response to some signal, and Addams heard the halt of his foot upon the stairs.

"Other ways." The threat held possession of Addams's brain. What did that mean—Jim, or Peggy?

CHAPTER XIV

THE STRATEGY OF THE QUONG SHING TONG

PEGGY WINTON looked at her wristwatch and smothered a tiny yawn. It was close to eleven o'clock, but she had determined not to go to bed until her brother and Archer Addams returned from their attempt to secure sailors for the trip.

She sat on the long veranda of their cottage, vine-curtained from the street. From the hotel, across the dark lawns, set about with high hedges of hibiscus, spattered with the moonlight that fought its way through the tree canopies, came the lilt of the native orchestra, flute and guitar and violin, the voices of the musicians blending now and then in little snatches of song.

All about the girl, as she sat reading casually by the shaded electrics, it was very quiet. The whole life of the place seemed centered at the main building, a block away across the gardens in which the cottage colony was set. At the other end of the veranda, squatting on his haunches was Selim, silent, motionless, save for the occasional shifting of his hands as he smoked incessant cigarettes, little sparks that died and were born again in the gloom.

The glamour of the semi-tropics, the fragrance of the flowers, the velvet feel of the air, invested Peggy Winton with a feeling of elation, an exultant sense of living in a romance of which she was a delightful part. She laid down her magazine and let her thoughts run down the back trail to a week ago, then back again over the swift, vivid incidents of the transition from the firelit studio in Washington Square, the snowy cityscape outside and the old adventurer spinning his yarn, to this land of sunshine and flowers, perfume and moonlight.

The outcome seemed rosy as she projected her thoughts ahead, strengthened by hopes and wishes that she but vaguely allowed her heart and mind to dwell upon. Essentially vital, the girl reveled in the action in which she found herself suddenly projected from the rut where she had seemed doomed to travel. Her spirit rose in mutiny at the thought of being left behind with the Belmonts while the two men rounded out the quest, and she resolved to put up a stirring argument to be taken along. Her brother, to whom she had always acted as a balance-wheel, she knew she could persuade, but she realized, with a little thrill of half resentment, half acknowledgment, the quieter mastery of Archer Addams.

She drifted into a reverie from which she roused herself as some one mounted the steps of the veranda and tapped at the screen-door. Selim rose lithely and opened it. A native, neatly clad in blue serge, came within the brighter radius of the lights.

He bowed respectfully, with a flash of white teeth, and presented a card to the girl It was her brother's.

"The gentleman give me this," he said. "He say he like this man," he indicated Selim, "to come *wikiwiki*—quick," he translated, with another smile.

"Where to?" asked Peggy casually.

"I show him," said the man. "Mr. Winton say he want him to carry some package."

Selim looked inquiringly at his mistress.

"All right," she said. "Wait a moment."

She entered her room and brought out a coin for the messenger. He looked at her curiously as he took it. Then the two went away together.

Before she had settled herself again the telephone bell sounded.

"This is the office, Miss Winton," came

the message. "Can you come over here for a moment?"

Peggy hesitated.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"One moment," said the person at the other end of the 'phone.

Peggy waited and heard another voice, suave, cultivated, with just the hidden hint of an accent, indefinite, elusive.

"This is Mr. Champion," it said. "They tell me Mr. Addams and Mr. Winton are out. I wanted to see them—about a matter of special importance. I would much rather talk it over than leave a message. If you prefer, I can come to your cottage, if it is not too late?"

Peggy considered rapidly. Conventions seemed petty in the light of their enterprise, but it was late and she was alone.

"I'll come over," she said.

She caught up a strip of black lace and threw it over her head above the light gown she wore and ran swiftly down the steps, passing up the little path that split the lawn and led to the main drive.

Two men rose from the shadow of the hedge, one on either side of the path. A soft pad of something was pressed upon her face; pungent, intoxicating fumes filled mouth and nostrils, penetrating, simultaneously it seemed, to lungs and brain, as she swooned and fell, one hand grasping at the shrubbery of the hedge. The powerful engine of a motor-car panted softly on the street.

One of the men looked hurriedly up and down the driveway. Then the two bore the limp form of the girl to the machine and laid it on the floor of the tonneau, taking places themselves on the wide seat. As the door clicked, the driver threw in his clutch and the car, with a whirr, glided rapidly away.

SELIM walked with the messenger who had brought the card, down towards the water-front. The native led the way to a saloon, which they entered.

"One minute," he said. "You sit down. I tell them. I think they in back room."

Selim sat at one of the little tables while the Hawaiian crossed the floor and went through a door at the back. The Arab waited patiently, ordering a drink, which he left untouched, watching the random crowd. Several men, he noticed, went through the door by which the native had left the room.

Presently he rose and opened the exit. An alley lay before him, blind-walled, deserted.

At top speed he ran through the quiet streets back to the Royal Hotel and the cottage. It was deserted, the lights still burning. He sped to the ungated opening in the hedge where the path led to the driveway. On the lawn to one side showed the scattered scarlet petals of an hibiscus bloom. Beyond them something darker than the grass showed in the shadow. The Arab picked it up, recognizing it as his mistress' lace wrap.

Like a hound on the trail, he cast swiftly on both sides of the path, noting the faint clutter of footprints on the drive. The hard, shell street revealed nothing, but on the curb where the motor-car had waited, showed a shred of vermilion where a petal had fallen from the girl's unconscious hand.

Not stopping to pick it up, Selim sped westward to Fort Street and on to where Nuuanu Avenue unrolled its white ribbon, leading up to the valley to where the dividing mountain-walls formed the gap of the Pali precipice. In this direction lay the house where the invalid of the wheel-chair was stopping.

The road was barred by shadows, the sidewalks dark beneath the trees. Here and there great poinciana trees, brilliant in daytime as a mammoth scarlet geranium, made great archways beneath which the Arab ran swiftly, bound for the house to which he had traced the man in the wheel-chair.

Practically in the confidence of his employers, Selim's quick wits had pieced together suspicion and situation and coupled up the abduction of his mistress with the man he had been told to trace from the wharf. To Peggy Winton he had attached himself in absolute devotion from the time that he, an alien—unable to attend to his duties, expecting therefore to be cast out as useless—had found himself nursed back to life with tenderness and consideration. The spirit that renders the Arabic emotion absolute, whether for fanaticism, love, hatred or fidelity, was strong within the breast of Selim, as he bent all his energies and primitive, unspoiled capacity for the chase upon the trail.

Presently he reached the quiet cemetery, with its monuments of converted Hawaiians; of the chiefs of the island race, lying in mausoleums of coral and lava stone while their ancestors slept the last sleep in hidden mountain-caves; of Saxon and Latin, missionary or merchant, soldier of the cross or sailor-trader of the yard-stick—adventurers all—at rest beneath the tropical verdure that sought so speedily to cover up the lifeless clay before it reclaimed it to transmuted uses.

A high-powered car, with three men in the tonneau, came plunging by. Selim crouched in the shadow of one of the pillars of the main entrance, watching the machine as it raced townward, trying in vain to discern features as the car fled past him.

High rails of iron shut off the cemetery from the street. By these Selim ran at top speed. The mountain end of the graveyard was uncared for and overgrown, its mounds and tumble-down vaults adrift in the sea of untrimmed growth. At this, its northern border, a ragged hedge separated the cemetery from the garden of the house to which Selim was bound.

Set back from the road a hundred yards, the house was invisible from the gateway, lost in a riot of vines that clambered up the palms, hung in festoons between them and smothered the coral-block walls of the house. Along the outer wall of gray lava sprawled the cactus leaves of the night-blooming cereus, ten thousand of its silver blossoms wide-eyed to the moon. The garden held the heavy, depressing fragrance of a mortuary, the house itself was silent and dark as a tomb.

The hard convict-made road that led up Nuuanu Valley had shown no sign, but Selim saw in the softer dust of the drive the fresh impression of the tires of a car, entering and leaving.

He crept with swift stealth to the house and circled it. All the lower windows were tight-shuttered, those of the upper story looked blankly to the night. As he made a second patrol a dim light showed through a barred window at the back, and vanished. A coco-palm, standing at a sharp angle, grew close by.

Selim threw off his shoes and socks and nimbly climbed the slanting stem, with clinging fingers and toes, like a man-ape. There was a heavy sill in the deep casement, and iron bars guarded the now dark window. The palm trunk came within two feet of the building. Crouching on the tree Selim looked and listened. There seemed no actual window behind the bars, or else the frames that held the glass had been swung inward.

As he watched, his quick ears caught the shuffle of feet. The light again dimly illumined the room. A woman carrying a candle came towards the window. Selim flattened on the palm trunk. The woman closed the window behind the bars without looking out and the light vanished, the footsteps deadened now by the intervening glass.

Selim slid swiftly to the ground and put on his shoes. He had seen enough. The woman was, as he had expected, the nurse of the man in the wheel-chair, still in her linen uniform, but at her throat his swift eyes had seen and recognized in the lamplight a miniature, set about with pearls and enamel, that Peggy Winton often wore and that Selim had noticed on her gown that same evening.

For a moment he considered the situation. The window he had just been surveying was barred, the others unapproachable save for a ladder, or closed with heavy iron shutters. He felt certain that his mistress was inside, imprisoned, helpless. But, being an Arab, he possessed the rare faculty of summoning patience to his aid when impatience spelled impotence.

He was an alien. The laws of the country he knew nothing of, save that the police were men of darker color than himself, who spoke for the most part a barbarous tongue. An attempt on his part, alone, at the housebreaking that seemed necessary for a rescue, might result in disaster for him and the removal of the only man, outside of her enemies, who knew of the whereabouts of the girl.

That he had been lured by a false message to give opportunity for kidnaping his mistress was plain to him. Her brother, and Addams, recognized by Selim as the true leader of the expedition, might, missing the girl, find their way to the lonely house from his description of it to them after he had traced the man in the wheel-chair to its doorway; but they did not know positively, as he did, that she had been brought there. And they might not miss her until the next morning, believing her asleep in her own room and not wanting to disturb her.

He paused irresolute, then confident that the first and right step was to get in touch with his masters, sped back to the hotel cottage even more swiftly than he had come.

CHAPTER XV

ADDAMS CAPITULATES

THE grille resolved itself once more into an orange square, set with vertical bars. As it brightened, the halting step of Henley, followed by the lighter, firmer ones of the Chinaman, brought back Addams from the borderland of unconsciousness. His shoulders seemed swollen to an enormous size, his cracked lips and parched tongue ached for water as he wondered how long he had been left on the little platform, half standing, half suspended.

The door opened and the two men entered. Once more the electric flash blinded him and Henley laughed while the victim tried to bring his pain-racked features to some semblance of composure with which to face his tormentors.

At the command of the Chinaman, Henley roughly slackened the rope sufficiently for Addams to sit upon a bale, and the blue-white ray of the torch was shut off. The swift and painful release from the strain summoned all his reserves of will to keep from fainting. The Chinaman's voice seemed very far off.

"I have been looking at the matter from all sides, Mr. Addams," the suave tones purred on. "You see, naturally, intending to secure the treasure yourself, you gave a false position in the newspaper in an endeavor to throw Henley off the scent. It has occurred to me that you and your friend, Mr. Winton, might have agreed on a set of figures to use in a crisis like this. I may be overcrediting you, but you seem to have been a very careful man with your secret. So I decided to raise an issue that should settle the matter to treat the affair psychologically.

"You may not rate your own safety, nor that of your friend as worth this three-quarters of a million, but I fancy you may place a higher estimate upon your friend's sister?"

A flick of the electric beam showed Addams's jaw rigid and thrust forward, his lips in a tight line, his eyes steely and determined.

"This is not a trick of the "third degree," went on the Oriental blandly. "The lady is in my possession. I should be loath to use any means of persuasion with her. She is very charming. You, I am sure, would be unwilling to have me do so. Don't try to rise, Mr. Addams, or we shall be forced to string you up again."

Addams relaxed, with a mental groan at his uselessness.

"I shall ask you to tell me the position," went on the Chinaman, "and I shall then verify it as far as possible through your friend and the young lady. All three of you will then be kept where I have placed you until such time as we secure the treasure. We shall not return to Hawaii. It will be unnecessary, but I shall arrange for your release within, say—two weeks.

"Now then—" the smooth voice altered its tone to the sound of metal upon metal—"the position of the island?"

Addams opened his lips but only a harsh clicking sound issued from his throat.

The Chinaman produced a silver flask from an inside pocket.

"I thought you might need this," he said, pouring some of the contents into the container that cupped the bottom of the flask and holding it to his prisoner's lips. "It will not hurt you."

Addams sipped, then gulped eagerly. The drink was slightly acidulous, yet fruity and deliciously soothing to the fevered membranes of his mouth and throat.

"Made from tamarinds and limes," said the Chinaman. "You can speak now. There is no need to delay matters. You must be very uncomfortable."

"You say," said Addams, "that you have Miss Winton in your possession. I do not believe it."

"Look," said the Oriental.

He threw on the contact switch of his torch. The beam shone on a tress of red-gold hair that shone alive, iridescent, as it moved in the Chinaman's smooth fingers.

Addams started forward, bound as he was, to fall back at Henley's rough thrust. A groan that all the torture could not wring from him, broke from his lips.

The electric ray was clicked off, the lock of hair, shimmering even in the dim light of Henley's lantern, was restored to the pocket from which it had been taken.

* * *

A VISION of Peggy bound, helpless at the hands of this imperturbable fiend, set every pulse in Addams' body throbbing with hot blood. He struggled to burst the cords that bound him and, realizing his absolute impotence, as

Henley's rough hands on his shoulders held him helpless, subsided.

"Even with the ropes off you will find yourself incapable of doing much damage for at least the first few minutes," said the Chinaman in tones that mocked in their evenness. "You will give me the position?

"Otherwise," he went on after a pause of a few seconds, "the lady may have to suffer annoyance."

Addams's fury spent itself at the realization of the position of the girl he loved. There was no question now as to the gold, though, had it been merely the matter of his own safety, he would have fought to the last. Now he was out-tricked by a master of stratagem.

"How do I know you will keep your share of the bargain—that Miss Winton will be cared for?"

"Tut—tut—my dear man," answered the Oriental. "You must take my word for it. All I want is the gold. For your life, your friend's, the girl's, I care nothing. They are absolutely valueless to me. So, in exchange for your information, I shall present them to you. There will be a little inconvenience for a little while, that is all."

The utter lack of sentiment in the cold tones gave them conviction. Capitulation was the only way of escape. Raging inwardly, Addams gave the figures. The Chinaman set them down in a notebook.

"Varying considerably from those in the *Herald*," he said. "Now to verify them."

"You can do that easily enough," said Addams coldly, resolved to end the matter. "If you will rip away the name label in the breast-pocket of my coat you will find the longitude marked on the under side. In the same place Mr. Winton has the latitude."

The Oriental deftly opened Addams' coat and with the sharp blade of a small pocket-knife severed the threads of the label.

"I must compliment you on your ingenuity," he said. "I must confess to having overlooked that, which was very careless of me. Henley will return your valuables and those of your friend. You may rest assured that Miss Winton shall be taken good care of until you see her. As for us, we shall not meet again."

He swiftly cut the cords at Addams' ankles and wrists and motioned Henley, who had set down the contents of Addams's pockets on a bale, to the door.

"I shall leave you this," he said smiling, and tossed something soft and clinging on to Addams's knees. It was the lock of Peggy's hair.

Addams's numb limbs refused to answer to his will. His arms were powerless, as if they had been torn from their sockets. Henley's face darkened the grille.

"Good-by, Mr. Fox," he sneered. "If I'd had my way I'd have taken the gal along, too, to see if her hair matched the gold. I may do it yet!"

With a supreme effort Addams stood up, forcing his paralyzed arms to action and stumbled to the door. Henley with a laugh, spat through the grating at him and limped away.

CHAPTER XVI

AH SING

FOR half an hour Addams forced the reluctant circulation back into his arms by kneading them. His shoulders were humps of living pain as he worked them as well as he could against the protesting tendons and muscles.

On the bale he found his match-case with the other things that Henley had restored, and he used them one by one in a futile search of some possible way out. He wondered what had happened to Selim, clenching his fists at the way the tables had been turned upon him.

Suddenly he remembered his watch and struck one of his last matches to read the time. It was midnight. He held it to his ear to reassure himself by the ticking, thinking it had been far later.

It was a sad ravel to disentangle and no easy matter for the strongest of men, physically and mentally distressed, as was Addams, to center his best efforts upon the patient untwisting of the snarl. One end of the thread was plain: the prime necessity of getting free from his surroundings. But the following of it was beset with knots and twists.

The whereabouts and welfare of Peggy was aggressively his foremost thought. The problem was many-sided at its best. With Peggy found, Jim Winton loosed, there was a bare chance of getting to the island first. The *Wavecrest* he knew could outsail the lumber schooner, though the course was before the wind and with the latter's larger spread of canvas, the handicap would be larger. Beyond all this, the combination, of which Henley was now palpably little more than a figurehead beside the calm, calculating Oriental, did not know the secret of the caves. If they arrived first, however, they would undoubtedly defend the island easily enough by guarding the solitary reef passage until they had ransacked every square foot of it. In an eight-hundred-mile trip to leeward, he figured feverishly, he could afford to give the *Lei Lehua* eighteen hours' start, and within one hour more they would, in all probability, be on their way.

Then the peril of Peggy, the fear that the Chinaman would not keep his word, the final threat of Henley, sped through his brain in a mental phantasmagoria which his will strove to keep in focus and safe proportion.

He put the lock of Peggy's hair within his breast pocket, telling himself it was a talisman involuntarily bestowed by the Chinaman. His arms, thanks to his chafing, were regaining some of their use, though his shoulders seemed stiffening as he clutched the bars of the grille that Henley had left unshuttered and peered into the gloom of the passage. Far to one side a lamp dimly showed the door of the room where the smokers were sleeping out their poppy dreams. There was little hope of help from that direction. Undoubtedly they were friends or servants of the shrewd head Chinaman who had so suddenly assumed the mastery of the situation.

Addams tingled in every nerve with the desire to batter the smooth, shrewd face of his late Chinese captor and to come to handgrips with Henley. He shook the bars in raging inability.

The door across the passage opened, and the acrid tang of opium stole out with the figure of a stout Chinaman who emerged, stretching himself before he closed the door. The light from within and that of the lamp in the passage revealed his features. It was Ah Sing, the Chinaman of Pearl Harbor, the servant of Stevens, the man who was to go with them at his master's suggestion.

Addams hissed between his teeth in a low but piercing note. Ah Sing turned at the sound as Addams lit a match at the grille.

"Ah Sing," he whispered, "come here."

The Chinaman closed the door and came wonderingly toward him, looking curiously at the face behind the bars.

"Ah Sing," repeated Addams. "You know me. You remember, yesterday, at Pearl Harbor? Mr. Stevens's friend? Speak quiet."

"Eyah!" exclaimed the Chinaman. "Sure I sabby you. You write catch Misteh Stevens with cable. You catch?"

"Sure, Ah Sing, I catch," said Addams. "I've not got the cable message here. It's at the hotel, but Mr. Stevens says all right. He says you are to come, too."

"Sabby that all light," answered Ah Sing. "I catch um cable, too. I go 'long of you. Wha' mally you here. You come all same me—smoke pipe?"

"I got locked in, Ah Sing," said Addams, cautiously foregoing lengthier explanations. "Can you let me out? Also my friend is somewhere, locked in, too."

Ah Sing fumbled with some bolts and swung open the door. As Addams stepped free, an old Chinaman came from the room across the passage and spoke to Ah Sing, who chattered volubly with him. The latter led the older man back into the cellar.

"You come along; us make talk one minute," he said to Addams.

"This man he speak Tuan Yuck; he say you stop here one-two week," he went on in a low whisper. "Tuan Yuck he velly big man, all same he head Quong Sing Tong. This man he 'flaid let you go. I don' know, mebbe, suppose you give him plenty money, all li'! He no like Tuan Tuck, plenty hate but plenty 'flaid. You give him, I think mebbe, thlee, fo' hundred dolla, he go 'way, go China mebbe. Tuan Yuck no find!"

"I'll give him five hundred if he'll come with me to the hotel," said Addams.

The two chattered in what seemed to Addams an interminable chant of useless syllables.

"All li'," said Ah Sing at length. "He come hotel. Now he show you your flend, we go."

The older Chinaman, apparently the keeper of the place, with a gesture for stealth, went down the passage and unbarred a heavy door. Beyond, a ladder led down another flight underground. Close to its foot was a door, fastened without by a heavy cross-piece of iron. Ah Sing had brought the lamp from the corridor, and as the door opened Winton appeared, pale and disheveled, a bruise on his forehead, blinking wonderingly in the light.

"Hello, Archer," he said. "Good work! I thought I was in for life. Say, they got——"

He stopped at Addams' imperative signal of silence, and the four climbed three flights of wooden stairs, creaking despite their care, and entered the rear door of a Chinese general store through another carefully protected entrance.

"You stay here," said Ah Sing. "I go look see evellything all li'!"

Winton felt for Addams's hand in the darkness and gripped it. "They got the figures out of my pocket-tag," he whispered.

"I know," returned Addams in the same tone. "I'll explain later."

Ah Sing, re-entering the store, called softly to them. In a moment they were in the narrow street where a hack was drawn up to the curb.

"Betteh we lide," said Ah Sing. "This dliver, he my cousin. He all li'."

Addams hesitated for a second and reassured himself. So far the two Chinese had at least set them free.

THE four climbed into the stuffy hack, filled with faint Oriental odors. Ah Sing gave the direction to drive to the Royal Hotel. The horse moved off with unexpected briskness as the Chinese hackman cracked his whip, and they were soon rolling swiftly over the practically deserted streets.

Addams held the news of disaster from Winton until they should arrive at the cottage. In his present mood he was disinclined to discuss anything aloud, friendly as Ah Sing appeared.

"Tuan Yuck," said the latter, leaning from his seat beside the keeper of the opium den and speaking softly, "he one time too much beat this man, too much floggee, take his wife, one, two wife. He plenty think Tuan Yuck no good, but all time aflaid. He belong same tong. Me I no belong Quong Sing Tong. I go to this man fo' smoke pipe —number one hop he catch all time. Tuan Yuck, he no good. Plenty lich, plenty stlong. He speak along you? You sabby him? He fat all same me—one velly big diamond he catch?

"Yes," said Addams grimly, "I saw him."

"Al li'. Hotel we stop now. Bimeby I tell you more."

At Addams's orders Ah Sing directed the driver to the cottage, and the oddly assorted quartet hastily mounted the veranda and entered Winton's room.

"Go over to the hotel, Jim, and get five hundred dollars on the jump," said Addams, curbing his impatience till the Oriental was dismissed. He had hoped against hope to find Selim waiting for them. Now the tangle seemed as hopeless as ever.

The old Chinaman crouched in a chair, looking fearfully about him. Ah Sing pulled down the blinds while Addams paced the floor. The hackman had been told to wait.

"This man he too much aflaid," said Ah Sing. "Fihst steamboat it come, he go China. Now he get money, he hide."

"Tuang Yuck has gone away," said Addams.

The close-fitting lids of Ah Sing's eyes lifted almost imperceptibly then closed to their normal slits.

Winton came in with a clinking double-handful of coin.

"I caught the manager up," he said. "There's a dance on. Here's the money."

He piled the twenty-five twenty-dollar pieces in a glittering rouleau whose yellow glitter seemed reflected in the old Chinaman's covetous eyes.

Ah Sing spoke to his fellow countryman and the latter nodded.

"He say you can tlust him. I say so, too," he said, turning to Addams. "He all li'. He no speak."

Regarding the five hundred dollars as fair pay for their release, regardless of other obligations, Addams clinked the money into the yellow cups of the Chinaman's palms. In the split of a second, by some act of legerdemain, it had vanished, and the man stood looking for his leave to go.

Addams nodded at the door and he disappeared, the padded soles of his slippers noiseless on the veranda.

Addams turned to Winton, but Ah Sing stepped in front of him, pointing at a charm that swung from the chain restored by Henley. It was a Masonic emblem of the higher degree.

"You sabby that?" asked Ah Sing, lightly touching the ornament.

Addams nodded bruskly, eager to tell Winton the news and start search for Peggy.

"I sabby too, plenty much," said Ah Sing.

He wheeled and looked at Winton, on

whose waistcoat shone a similar emblem.

"You, your flen', Misteh Stevens, me—all same sabby," went on Ah Sing with glittering eyes. "'Melican man he call Mason, Chinaman he speak otheh name. All same."

To the astonishment of the two men he swiftly produced a jade charm from beneath his blouse, suspended by a slight chain of gold, carved in practically the identical emblems worn by the two Americans; then rapidly, by signs and pigeon-English he demonstrated the close identity of the fraternal ritual, Occidental and Oriental.

"Now you sabby, I flend, I speak tlue," said Ah Sing. "I sabby you Misteh Steven flend, you both my blotheh, all 'long this." He showed the jade charm before he tucked it underneath his blouse. "Suppose you in tlouble, I think I can help, mebbe. I no flend Tuan Yuck. Plenty Chinaman I know not his flend."

He thrust out his hand and exchanged a secret grip with both the men, then stood back, complacent, smiling.

Addams looked at him with wondering assurance. Here was an unexpected ally. The coil might yet be undone.

"Sit down," he said to Ah Sing. "Here's the trouble. We are after buried treasure, Ah Sing. A man named Henley, a lame man who lived here once——"

The Chinaman nodded comprehension.

"I sabby him," he said. "He smuggle opium, one time."

"Well, he is trying to get there first. Tuan Yuck is helping him with money, I think."

Ah Sing grinned. His opinion of Henley's judgment in selecting Tuan Yuck as business partner was evidently a depreciatory one.

"They got us where you found us," went on Addams hurriedly, "and tried to make us tell. They tied me up——"

The Chinaman made a comprehensive gesture.

"My God, Archer!" exclaimed Winton "Do you mean the brutes tortured you?"

"Never mind that," said Addams. "I wouldn't tell them. So then they got hold of Miss Winton, your sister."

Winton sprang to his feet.

"Peggy!" he cried. "I thought she was asleep in her room. Where's Selim. What have they done with her?"

"That's what we've got to find out," answered Addams grimly. "They tricked them somehow as they tricked us. Look!"

He took out the lock of red-gold hair. Winton, his eyes blazing, took it in his hands.

"Go on," he said hoarsely.

"They threatened things against her," said Addams, "until I gave them the position. That's how they knew about the figures in your coat, Jim. They promised to release us and her, wherever they've hidden her, after they got clear with the treasure. We've got to find her."

Winton turned, his face twisted.

"How?" he asked. "Archer, it's my fault. Like the trifling idiot I am, I wasted time yesterday with Miss Belmont. It was late when I got down to looking up these sailors, and when this chap Silva offered himself I fell right into the trap, like a blundering ass."

He wilted under the look in his friend's eyes and sat heavily into a chair, his face in his hands.

"Brace up!" snapped Addams. "This is no time for slumping. If your infernal philandering lost her, it won't bring her back again. They may have taken her to the place Selim traced Henley to. But he's missing, too. As it is——"

He strode over to the wall-telephone.

"What are you going to do?" asked Winton dejectedly.

"Do! Everything that can be done. Call up the police for one thing. This is a civilized community. A Chinese tong leader is not running American territory. We know where they've gone, for one thing. We'll charter a tug, if the Government won't, and bring them back."

"Then, at the best, we lose the gold, once it all gets out," said Winton.

Addams's eyes blazed as he clicked the hook of the 'phone impatiently.

"To Hades with the money!" he cried. "What kind of a man are you, Jim?"

Winton got up, a new determination imprinted on his features.

"I didn't mean anything like that, Archer," he said. "Don't judge me too harshly. I was only blaming myself for everything."

"Time enough for that later," said Addams. "Hello! Is this the office? Connect me with——"

The door from the veranda opened and Selim stood on the threshold, his dark eyes on his masters, his chest heaving from his long run through the darkness.

Addams turned at the click of the latch.

"Selim!" he cried. "Miss Peggy?"

"I show you," said the Arab. "Come."

CHAPTER XVII

IN THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

THE hack, Selim on the box beside the Chinese driver, quickly covered the distance to the cemetery and stopped a little beyond the entrance to the house to which the Arab had trailed the girl. Addams and Winton stepped out with Ah Sing as Selim jumped from his seat.

"I sabby this house," whispered the Chinaman. "One time befo', Misteh Henley live this place, long time he smuggle opium."

They advanced cautiously through the garden wilderness and rounded the darkened house to where Selim pointed out the palm and the window at which he had seen the woman wearing the girl's miniature.

"I can to the window jump," he said, stripping off his shoes. "Bars a long way apart. I theenk maybe I can get in."

"Try it," said Addams. "We'll tackle the front of the house. If we can't break in we'll create a diversion. Up you go!"

The Arab climbed nimbly up the palm as the rest slipped through the shadows to the front door and mounted the porch catpawed, on the balls of their feet.

Addams tried the handle. It yielded and the door opened. Fearful of surprise, he took out the automatic he had brought from the hotel cottage and entered the silent, dusty hall, Winton following his example, Ah Sing close behind.

They stood listening. The house was void of sound. Addams felt for the loose sleeve of the Chinaman's blouse.

"Get one of the hack-lamps," he whispered. "Cover the light as you come back."

The two white men waited until Ah Sing was silently beside them again, the lamp shrouded with his loose jacket.

Addams took the light and they explored the lower floor. All the tight-shuttered rooms, save one, evidently the kitchen, were empty of furniture, the floors soft with dust on which their feet left trails.

The kitchen had been swept and apparently lately occupied. There were four or five chairs and a cheap table, on which stood a half-filled lamp. In the sink were piled some dirty dishes with grimy finger-marked glasses on the drain-board, and beneath it three or four emptied bottles. On a shelf showed a row of unopened canned goods.

Ah Sing approached the stove, looked into the pots that stood there and took off a lid from the fire-grate.

"Stove plenty hot," he said. "Some one he cook, I think mebbe three, fo' hour ago."

A closet disclosed a bundle of dirty rags on the floor beneath empty shelves. Winton lit the lamp and they proceeded noiselessly to the upper story. In one room a pine wardrobe and a cot with the bedclothes neatly arranged set them to greater caution. The room adjoining was similarly furnished. A bath-room held towels, used and clean. The other rooms were as those below, dusty and long deserted. In the last they entered. At the back they found Selim beyond the casement bars, tugging to bend them sufficiently for entrance. Addams opened the window.

"Can you make the tree again," he asked.

Selim, crouching on the wide sill, nodded.

"Then come 'round to meet us at the front."

The Arab turned on his haunches and, measuring his distance sprang for the palm, sliding down its trunk in safety as the three men descended the stairs.

The house was vacant. There seemed to be no cellar. Its coral-stone foundations rested on the solid ground. Selim joined them, and the group assembled in the kitchen in perplexity.

"Tell us your story again, Selim," said Addams. "You are sure you saw the woman at the window."

The Arab recapitulated the details he had already told them in the hack. There seemed no clew, no suggestion of a lead.

"Moon's down," said Addams. "We might find footprints in the garden, but they may have heard or seen Selim and gone away by motor.

The Arab shook his head.

"They not see—not hear me." he declared.

Ah Sing, whose eyes had been puckered to blindness, matching the furrows in his forehead, suddenly threw up his head like a hound that had caught the scent. He caught up one of the empty bottles and commenced sounding the floor of the kitchen. His Oriental instincts had suggested a hidden exit.

"Good man!" said Addams. "We'll try all the rooms."

But Ah Sing's ear had detected a hollowness beneath the boards. He followed it to the door of the closet where he tossed out the rags and knocked with his knuckles triumphantly on the floor below the shelving.

"I find," he announced. "All same Chinaman they fix."

A close examination discovered a plank that tilted, disclosing rope handles in a hollowed space between the false flooring and the lid of a trap-door that rose easily. The rough steps of a ladder were revealed while from the aperture came a dank, musty smell.

* * *

TEN steps led to a low and narrow tunnel lined with stones, adrip with moisture and patched heavily with fungous growths that dabbed at them with damp suggestions of ghostly fingers.

Addams, in the lead, was forced to bow his head as he followed the passage, running at right angles to the lay of the house—leading towards the cemetery. His enforced position brought back an almost intolerable pain to his shoulders, forgotten in the excitement of the past hour. The tunnel with its foul, stale air, seemed interminable as he crept stealthily on, pistol in hand, the grotesque shadows of his companions jerking ahead at every step as they closely followed him.

He stopped. In front a light dimly outlined three sides of a door. Addams set down the carriage-lamp he carried and crawled forward on his hands and knees; Winton, Selim and Ah Sing imitating his example.

The door had sagged on its hinges from neglect. A break of the light that marked its opening edge indicated a bar or heavy lock on the inner side. As they paused, the sound of heavy breathing came from the other side.

Addams had noticed, as he placed his lamp on the floor, a stout wooden bar standing against the frame of the door, evidently used for barricading on the tunnel side. This he cautiously handled, passing it back until Winton and Selim grasped it with himself lengthwise, quickly grasping his intention. Ah Sing, behind them, held up the lamp, his eyes agleam with anticipatory excitement.

Three times they swung the impromptu battering ram to get full poise, then, Selim plunging at its end, catapulted it at the center of the door. It gave way, splintering rottenly, and a gust of musty air came through the falling panels as they leaped into a vaulted chamber, Addams seizing the figure of a woman, clad in a nurse's uniform, who sprang from some rugs on the floor at the abrupt intrusion.

As Winton and Selim came to help him, he left her to their not too tender mercies and strode across the flagged floor to where Peggy Winton, her golden hair atumble, raised herself upon one elbow from a rough pallet of matting, her eyes upon his.

"Thank God!" he said, a sob strangling his utterance. "Peggy!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE *WAVECREST* GETS A CREW

THE place was a mausoleum, the private tomb of some Hawaiian chief's family, as evidenced by the stands of moldering *kahilis*, tall poles plumed with feathers, like mammoth dusters, that drooped above a stone casket set upon a central platform of stone. Coffins were set in niches in the walls. A flight of steps led up to heavy metal doors.

The light of the carriage-lamp and a lantern on the floor sent pale rays searching out the fearsome vault in discouraged fashion. The place reeked with decay.

Addams hastened to get Peggy away. She stood clasped in her brother's arms, pale and still weak from the narcotic she had inhaled. Ah Sing and Selim grasped the woman, who looked defiantly at Addams who confronted her.

"Take off that brooch," he commanded.

The woman sullenly obeyed as Selim gave one hand temporary freedom, unknowing that her covetous vanity had furnished a step toward her own undoing.

"Get Peggy up-stairs, Jim, and into the air as soon as possible," said Addams. "I'll be with you in a minute. Now then," he faced Henley's sister, "I might have you jailed for robbery," he said.

"Try it," she answered, a defiant gleam in her eye.

Addams reflected. Privacy was still an important factor. The woman might tell, not all she knew, but enough to encumber them in a net of official and public annoyance. There was no chance of any of her friends returning. It had probably been arranged that at the end of the two weeks suggested by Tuan Yuck she should disappear, leaving Peggy to escape and join them as best she could.

The vital thing to do now was to see Peggy domiciled at the hotel with the Belmonts, get the *Wavecrest* in commission and start to overhaul the *Lei Lehua*. But he was determined not to leave the woman in Honolulu, still able to work injury upon Peggy. He looked at his watch. It was three o'clock.

"What time does the first train leave for Pearl Harbor, Ah Sing?" he asked.

"Seven o'clock."

"Then you come with me. Selim, stay here and watch this woman until some one relieves you. I'll get some food to you. Can you manage her?"

The Arab showed his teeth and produced a dagger from the girdle he wore instead of a belt.

"She stay," he said briefly.

"Betteh you tie," said Ah Sing. "Betteh mebbe you cut um throat, put um all same in coffin."

He pointed suggestively to the stone casket. The woman shrank back.

"You can tie her if you want to," said Addams.

He was largely callous about the treatment of one who had played jailer to Peggy in such a place and, in all probability, had subjected her to at least the indignity of cutting off the lock of hair which had brought about his capitulation. He wished that she had been a man upon whom he could have executed summary vengeance.

He left the tomb and hurried up the passage through the trap. As he reached the carriage in which Winton had placed his sister, Ah Sing caught up with him and mounted the box.

On the way back to the hotel, Peggy attempted to make light of her adventures.

She had been unconscious, she said, or practically so, until she had found herself in the tomb with Henley's sister barring the way out. She held a dim recollection of having been carried along a passage, but had no remembrance of being questioned or of her hair having been cut, until her brother told her of the occurrence.

Winton would have proceeded with a description of their own imprisonment had not Addams placed a compelling hand on his knee, being in no mind to allow the already overwrought girl to listen to anything of the sort.

"It's all right now, Peggy," he assured her. "How do you feel? That's the main thing. Jim and I are all right."

"I'll be fine after I've rested," said the girl pluckily.

"We'll all turn in and get what rest we can," said Addams. "Tomorrow, or rather, later today, we'll get under way and beat them at their own game."

"But I want to hear all about it," the girl persisted. "What has happened?"

"Strict orders of the leader of the expedition," said Addams, lightly but firmly. "No explanations, no discussions, till we've all had some sleep. I confess I'm about played out."

Peggy, weak and a little nauseated from the drug, leaned back in drowsy relaxation until the carriage halted outside the cottage. Addams and her brother helped her up the steps into her own room where she thanked them with tired eyes.

"Sleep as long as you can, Peggy," said Addams. "One of us will be on hand in the morning. Good night."

"Good night," answered the girl as they left her.

In their own room, with Ah Sing in attendance, Addams sank wearily into a chair.

"I'll have to get some liniment rubbed into my shoulders," he said. "I feel as if they'd been sewed together."

"I fix that," said Ah Sing. "You sabby *lomi-lomi?*"

Under his direction Addams lay face down on the bed stripped from the waist up, while the Chinaman kneaded and pulled at the swollen muscles in the Hawaiian massage. The pain at first was intense, and Addams bit at the counterpane to muzzle his involuntary protests.

For fifteen minutes the Oriental pinched and snapped and rubbed, dislocating and relocating the blades and soothing the bruised muscles until the fibers were supple once more. At last, the sweat rolling from his face, he stopped.

"Tomollow, next day, mebbe one time more, I fix," he said. "Then you all li'."

"It's a whole lot better now," declared Addams. "Now for the plan of campaign, Jim. I'm going to Pearl Harbor with Ah Sing—in three hours—to get the *Wavecrest* in commission. We'll sail her down to Honolulu tonight and we'll clear as soon as we get the stores aboard. You've got a full day. You've got to get food to Selim without being seen. You've got to get Peggy out to the Moana Hotel with the Belmonts. And you must see that the ship's chandler is ready to load us up by, say, five o'clock this afternoon. I'm relying on you, old chap."

"I'll not fail this time," said Winton reddening.

"Tell Selim we'll relieve him late this afternoon."

"What are you going to do with Henley's sister?" asked Winton.

"I'm going to take her along," said Addams, coming to a sudden decision. "She's too dangerous to be left loose in Honolulu, and we haven't time to fuss with her. I may leave her on the island and tell the Tuang Yuck-Henley combination to call for her if we get close enough to hail them."

"You think we can get there first?" asked Jim eagerly.

"Think? I know it," declared Addams with conviction. "We'll have to give them twenty-four hours' start, but the *Wavecrest* is a racer and the *Lei Lehua* is, comparatively speaking, a tub. We should clear tonight at ten, by moonrise. We don't need clearance papers, we're on a yachting cruise to the other islands. You might drop that information to the Belmonts, Jim, and 'round both hotels, casually. I'll give you a duplicate of the list I gave the chandler. You'll have to get some rifles and ammunition. Get Winchesters. Hire them if you can. Tell them we're going after wild goats on Hawaii."

He was up and walked lithely about the room, a pajama-top about his torso, vigorous and animated, as if the events of the last eight hours had merely aroused his best activity, despite his declaration of tiredness to Peggy. Ah Sing surveyed him with open admiration and Winton felt his spirit rise in response to his friend's."

"Archer, you're a wonder!" he declared. 'You can count on me, old man, for all I'm worth. I'll get Peggy stowed away. She'll kick, though, like a steer. But of course she can't go."

"Hardly," said Addams. "This is not going to be a pleasure trip from now on. I imagine there's a pretty large and tough crowd on the *Lei Lehua*, probably half Tuan Yuck's tong men and half Henley's pick-up following. I wish we had a crew."

"That's my fault," said Jim.

"Well, we must make the best of it," said Addams heartily. "There are four of us any way. Maybe we can find some one else."

"I CAN get good sailorman, one, two men my flen'," said Sing. "Sabby sea plenty. One man, he Loo Chow, in China he sail all same junk. Sabby can plenty fight, too. One man, he Foo Chin, he come suppose you pay. He sabby ship, sabby fight. All same big fighting men for China Tong. Not Quong Sing Tong—Tsue Chong Wo Yick Tong. All same they got no use for Tuan Yuck. They my flen'. Belong all same this."

He touched the hidden jade charm below his blouse.

"I'll give them a share in the treasure." said Addams. "You, too, Ah Sing. There's seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars——"

Ah Sing's slanting eyes opened wide.

"We'll split it into a hundred shares," said Addams, "at seventy-five hundred apiece. Selim gets two shares, so do you, Ah Sing, if we win out. That's fifteen thousand apiece for you. I'll give each of your men one share. If we lose, which we won't, I'll pay them two hundred and fifty apiece for their trouble, and you twice that. Is that all right?"

The Chinaman's eyes were glowing with enthusuasm.

"All same they go to hell for that," he said.

"That's settled then," said Addams, "if you can get them. Jim, you'll have to get six rifles and four more automatics. Split the buy at different stores and have them delivered here. We'll keep the cottage until tonight. Where are your friends, Ah Sing?"

"I go get them now," said Ah Sing. "I take hack. I meet you seven o'clock at lailway station."

He started for the door.

"You'll need some money for the driver and fares, Ah Sing," said Addams. "Wait a minute."

"I got plenty money," replied Ah Sing. "Bimeby you pay me. Suppose you no get gold," he went on earnestly, "you pay my flen', no pay me. Misteh Steven, he pay me. He your flen'. I work for you all same for him. So he speak in cableglam. All flen', all blotheh!"

He stepped quietly through the door and in a moment they heard the hack drive off.

"Well," said Addams. "We can thank our stars for fraternalism. We'll be a fine outfit, Jim. Three highbinders, an Arab who was once mate on a piratical dhow, and the pair of us, all armed to the teeth! No place for Peggy."

"No place for me either, Archer, if you weren't the biggest kind of a brick," declared Winton, "after all my falling down."

Addams said nothing, but clapped his friend on the shoulder.

"Let's go over that list for the schooner again, Jim," he said, "if you're not too sleepy. We can catch up when we get to sea."

"I couldn't sleep," declared Winton.

"Then we'll go out on the *lanai* and smoke. It's close to sunup now. We'll get some hot coffee in a little while. I hope Peggy's asleep. Wait, I'll put on my coat."

They tiptoed on to the veranda past the girl's darkened room and discussed the situation in whispers at the farther end of the *lanai* till the sky got gray and Addams persuaded the hotel clerk over the 'phone, all unconscious of the night's happenings, to send them over a hot breakfast.

At half-past six Addams rose.

"I'm off for Pearl Harbor," he declared. "Stick around till Peggy wakes up. Get her out to the *Moana* and see her settled. Then get in touch with Selim and hustle the rest of the things through. Look out for the schooner about the end of the afternoon. We'll have to hustle to get her sails bent and have her in shape. Good-by."

CHAPTER XIX

UNEXPECTED PASSENGERS

AT FIVE o'clock the *Wavecrest*, Addams at the helm, Ah Sing and his countrymen at the sheets, tacked up the channel entrance to Honolulu harbor and glided up to the wharf designated by the ship chandler.

Winton was waiting by the string-piece as the sails came down and were smartly stowed, taking the line Ah Sing tossed to him and snubbing it to a bulkhead.

"Everything ready, Archer," he said as Addams stepped ashore. "Men waiting to load. That's some crew you've got."

Addams glanced with satisfaction at the Chinese, working with a will to complete moorings. Both were of unusual height and evidently muscular. Loo Chow was far from prepossessing, with a villainous squint and a triangular face marked with scar-seams. Foo Chin was a veritable giant, with a bland moon-face that seemed incapable of cruelty, a good-natured smile playing upon it as he chatted with Ah Sing in a conversation that sounded like exploding fireworks.

"They're up to their work," he said. "How's Peggy?"

"I left her with the Belmonts," answered Winton. "She didn't make half the fuss I thought she would about not going. She's feeling fit again. Didn't propose coming down to see us off."

"Sensible girl," said Addams, inwardly disappointed. "We'll be on the jump. We'll have to stow things after we get away."

"She wants us to go out there to dinner, though," said Winton."

"I don't see how we can make it," said Addams regretfully. "We've got to get Selim and that sister of Henley's aboard as soon as it's dark. I'll requisition Ah Sing's cousin's hack again. You go out, Jim, and make good-bys for both of us. I'll telephone to Peggy."

"That isn't fair," demurred Winton.

"It's got to be. Peggy will understand. I've got to watch the loading, Jim. I know where I want things to go. You can explain to Peggy—and say good-by to Miss Belmont," he added.

"I've forgotten all that till we come back," protested Winton. "But it'll make it nicer for Peggy their being here. They want her to go over to the volcano with them."

"Fine," said Addams. "How's Selim and his prisoner?"

"He's got her bundled up in a blanket like a mummy," Winton replied. "She gave me a frank opinion of all of us till I told her I'd gag her. She's like a furious wildcat. Here's our man and his stevedores."

"Goin' out tonight?" asked the ship chandler, looking first at the sky, then to where the schooner flattened the rope puddings that protected her from the wharf timbers.

"Yes. Why?" asked Addams.

"Looks like we're goin' to get a *kona* before mornin'. Been workin' up for it all day. How was the wind comin' down?"

"A bit shifty. What's a *kona?*"

"Southerly gale. 'Sick wind,' the natives call it. Makes a weather shore out of this side of the island, dirty weather at that. Liable to blow forty to fifty an' keep it up for three days."

"Well, we'll chance it," said Addams. "That's the best news yet, Jim," he went on, as the dealer started to superintend getting the stores aboard.

"With the regular trades making a clear run of it to the island it would be a close call to outsail the *Lei Lehua* with her start against her spread of kites. But the *Wavecrest* is a witch at reaching and close-hauled. We can outpoint them and outsail them working into it. I'll set all hands scratching the varnish off the boom if it'll hurry up this *kona* he talks about. Get the rifles? We'll probably have a fight on our hands as it is, but we'll put up a better scrap if we've got the gold, than if our men were fighting against odds to get it away from them."

"The guns are up at the cottage."

"Take Ah Sing and get his hack. Settle the bill at the Royal and then pick up Selim and the woman. It'll be dark by the time you get there. Better gag her and get her into the hack as quietly as possible. You can drive in up to the door. I'll be waiting for you. We'll stow her in one of the staterooms. There are four of them; Stevens spent money on this yacht. Then you run out to the Moana and get back as soon as you can. I'll watch the loading."

"I'll have the guns and Selim and the tigress down here in an hour," said Winton. "And I'll be back from the Moana by eight. Is that time enough?"

"Plenty. Come down to Lycurgus' restaurant on King Street. I'll leave Selim in charge on board, and get a bite to eat before we start. The men will want something, too. I'll phone to Peggy from there. We'll start at moonrise. Ten o'clock. The tide's right for then."

At eight o'clock Winton joined Addams in a private box at the restaurant and the latter, finishing his coffee, called up the Moana on the 'phone. He came back to Winton a trifle disconcerted.

"Did you tell Peggy I was going to 'phone," he asked.

"Yes. Why?"

"She's gone to her room. Left a message for me. I suppose she's upset because I didn't go out. I thought she'd understand."

"I think she did, old man," said Winton. "I explained everything and she seemed to. But she said she was tired at dinner. She's going to be worried about us all the time we're gone. She needs all the rest she can get."

"Of course she does," acquiesced Addams not over cheerfully.

It was not like Peggy to take offense, he thought, and tried to dismiss the unpleasantness, as he remembered the tax that had been set upon her frail strength. He himself was conscious of the strain. So was Jim, he realized, as he looked at his friend's drawn face and weary eyes. As he had said, the rest of the trip in no way resembled a picnic, and the best place for Peggy was a comfortable hotel and the society of the friendly pleasure-loving Belmonts.

At nine o'clock the complement of the *Wavecrest* was aboard, stowing away the goods that cluttered up the main cabin into some temporary order while they waited for the turn of the tide. Their prisoner stayed quietly sullen in her stateroom where Selim had served her food brought from a water-front restaurant. The Arab had freed her bonds and locked the stateroom door on the outside. Addams and Winton were too busy to interview her. The excitement of getting to sea mustered up their reserves of strength into an energy that rushed the work before them. The Chinese worked cheerfully, stowing away the supplies into the lazarette and the plentiful lockers with which the schooner was provided.

At half-past nine a faint glow behind the coffin-shaped mud-crater of Diamond Head announced the coming moon. The wind was blowing more strongly on-shore every minute. The harbor craft had set out extra lines and the *Wavecrest* chafed at her moorings. The trade-clouds had gone from their steady vigil of the inland mountain-tops, the stars were obscured by a filmy scud flying high overhead before the southerly gale.

At ten o'clock the full moon topped the crater, orange through the atmospheric veil. The wharf was deserted as Addams and

Winton, clad in oilskins, followed by Selim and the Orientals came on deck. Two reefs were set in mainsail and foresail, and the first swung up and swayed taut. The jib was set, and five minutes later forestaysail and foresail, as the schooner clawed her way out channel in the face of the wind, past the lighthouse, past the clanging bell-buoy, out to sea.

THE hollows in the insheeted canvas clutched like fingers at the gale as the waves slammed at the bow of the *Wavecrest*, forcing her passage outwards. Addams was at the wheel.

"Turn in, Jim," he said, his face wet with spray, gleaming in the moonlight and the glow of the binnacle lamp. A surge of foam rose at the bows and smothered the decks and his spirit, spurning the call of the tired body, leapt exultant to the fight. "Get a few hours' sleep."

"I've got to watch the staysail sheets," said Winton, his hands cupped to his mouth. "We can't risk missing stays in a blow like this."

"Good man, Jim!" Addams shouted as Winton went forward, clinging to the rail.

The best of his friend was coming out at the call of need and he warmed to him. It was a ticklish job getting sea-room off that lee shore with the least loss of time and travel. Every knot might count in the stern chase after the *Lei Lehua*. The gusts shrilled through the rigging, and wind and wave pounded at the stanch hull of the schooner with the sound of a furious artillery fire.

The lee they were making was hard to determine. Diamond Head had to be cleared and, after that, the islands of Molokai, Lauai, and Kahoolawe, lying in a southeasterly line, had to be given a wide berth. The *kona* gale swept in furiously from the southwest. The seas, what he glimpsed of them from the spume that swept over the starboard side, were a tumble of gray-green mountains and valleys. Winton was right. There must be no question of missing stays.

Addams put his strength to the wheel, setting his course south-southeast, handling the ready schooner on three spokes, save when he felt by seaman's instinct that a tack was necessary and spun the circle with a stentorian shout of, "Hard a-lee!" He would have liked to grip hands—had he one to spare—with the designer of the sturdy oak-ribbed, sweet-lined boat as she answered to her helm, then stayed for a moment, not hesitating, but eager to take the seas on each new course, laying over till the foam seethed through her scuppers, fighting, buoyant, dominant.

It was a long time since Addams had faced the elements, a deck beneath him, wet sails shining to the moon, spray crashing on his oilskins, the gale singing through the rigging; and in the sheer joy of it all, fatigue, the treasure, Tuan Yuck and Henley, even Peggy, were for the time forgotten.

At two in the morning, the moon totally obscured by the storm, Jim fought his way aft.

"I'm not much good as a steersman in this weather, Archer," he shouted into Addams's ear. "But you can't keep this up much longer. Ah Sing says Foo Chin is a top-notch man. Let him spell you."

Addams, his eyelids feeling as if they were fixed beyond the power of closing, his fingers turned to rigid hooks, called back:

"Send him aft! I'll try him!"

The Oriental came back, his bulk swaying easily to the pitching of the schooner.

"Make it sou'east-by-south and keep her steady!" Addams shouted, and the giant, nodding his comprehension, took over the wheel, peering into the compass-box.

Addams watched him for a few minutes, then joined Winton by the weather-rail.

"He'll do," he said. "We'll both turn in till dawn. Where's Selim?"

The Arab stood by the foremast shrouds, holding to them. Addams reached him.

"Call us at daybreak," he said, and with Winton, the gale sweeping them like a broom, went swiftly aft, reached the shelter of the companionway and staggered on leaden legs to the cabin.

There they threw themselves on the transom cushions.

"We've a clear course till morning, Jim," said Addams. "The men are all right—they slept on the way up."

A snore was his only answer. An instant later he lost himself in the deep sleep of exhaustion.

SELIM awakened them. Gray light filtered through the skylight. The seas were pounding at the bows. The Arab stood poised to the slant of the cabin floor, two half-filled mugs of steaming coffee clutched in one hand. The schooner lunged in long pitches as she rose to the seas.

"Fo' bells," said Selim, smiling, his brown face rimed with spray. "I got hot hash for you. The devil woman, she, oh, verree sick."

As their senses cleared they could hear between the slamming seas a high-pitched continuous moan from the cabin where Henley's sister was locked in.

Addams sat up, rubbing the stubborn sleep from his eyes, and began to put on the sticky oilskins he had discarded four hours before.

"Let her rave," said Jim, sleepily following his example. "Gee, but this coffee's good, Selim!"

They went into the galley, forking the hash from the pot lashed to the stove, and then gained the deck.

The sunfire glowed, close to the horizon, far away across a waste of streaking seas beyond the port bow, showing through the cloud-rack as if behind the bars of a clogged grate. On either side of the dim sun was the misty loom of land, far off, the blotches showing now and then as the schooner lifted to the crests.

"Keelai Kahiki Channel, however they pronounce it," said Addams, "lies between Lauai and Kahoolawe. Main's beyond. You can just see the mountain."

The crest of Haleakala, ten thousand feet above sea level, wrapped in a muddy fleece of clouds, revealed itself, a smudge against the working sky.

"We've come seventy miles and over," said Addams. "This is going to be some race, Jim."

Foo Chin greeted them cheerily as Addams took the wheel. Ah Sing and Loo Chow were forward in the lee of the foresail. Addams motioned them to go below.

"We'll take her over," he said, as the tired men gratefully sought the forward companion. "Get something to eat and turn in."

The wind blew steadily at a clip that presaged hours of force behind it. The waves, their crests flattened to the blast like the ears of an angry cat, surged against them as the seaworthy schooner battled with them, rank by rank, shook them off and kept her steady course. Boom tackles had been rigged, but there was no need for tacking; and minute after minute, hour by hour, they sped onward.

"Eight bells passed, the sharp strokes of the cabin clock repeated by Selim, who had come on deck and tapped them off on the yacht's bronze bell. On Addams' order he hauled in the log. It registered eighty-seven knots.

"Take off seven for leeway," said Addams. "That's eight knots an hour, Jim. I'll wager the lumber schooner isn't doing a whole lot better than six with her bows and beam. At this rate we'll fetch the island in four days and a half, and we're gaining fifty a day on her. We'll overhaul her easily."

"Great!" cried Winton. The short sleep, now that the gale had blown its lingering traces away, left them revivified, reinspired with the spirit of the quest. The seas raced by them, bowing their crests as if in acknowledgment of mastery. A frigate-bird swooped above them with hard incurious eye and braced wings, wheeling away to leeward after a brief scrutiny, reappearing again and again at intervals.

"Good luck!" cried Selim, pointing at the bird which squawked an answer as it plunged downward into the turmoil of the wake.

At four bells Ah Sing and his mates reappeared, and the two white men went below to consult their charts. Selim followed them.

The flaps of the cabin table had been raised and the surface set with a cloth, and dishes held in fiddles. In the passageway between the forward staterooms stood a slight figure, lithe to the motion of the vessel, clad in blue serge, the eager face crowned with red-gold hair, smiling at them.

"Peggy!" they cried simultaneously.

"Come aboard, sir," she said, still standing in the little corridor.

"What are you doing here?" asked Winton angrily. "This is no place for you, Peggy!"

"I had to come," she said. "I'm a third partner. You said so, Archer. Treat me as a stowaway if you want to. I'll scrape paint or be a cabin-boy, but I had to come."

"You had no right! You'll only be in the way!" exclaimed her brother."

Peggy's blue eyes filled.

"I'll not be in the way," she faltered.

Addams' heart went out to the plucky girl, swaying with the pitch of the schooner.

"Jim's right," he said. "You have no right aboard, Peggy. This is a man's trip with too many risks for a woman. But—we can't afford to turn back now."

"Would you rather I hadn't come?" she pleaded.

"Much," said Addams, while Winton scowled. Then he relented. "We're a band of desperadoes, Peggy," he said, "out-pirating pirates. You're to consider yourself entirely as a passenger. How did you come aboard? I suppose Selim had a hand in it."

"Don't blame him," said Peggy, "He's my servant. Don't punish him for obeying me."

She left the passage and sat down by the table.

"Come and have breakfast," she coaxed. "I helped to fix it."

"What will the Belmonts think of it?" asked her brother. "They'll be searching the island for you."

"I explained it all to Madeline," she answered, regaining confidence at the assurance the schooner was not to be turned back nor she to be set ashore. "She understands. She told me to tell you, Jim, she wished she could come along. I took a taxicab and came aboard while you were telephoning me, Archer, I guess," she added. "You didn't suppose I was going to let you leave without saying good-by, did you? Or that I could wait ashore and worry myself gray-headed, wondering what had happened to you?"

Addams sat down, and Winton, half appeased, took place beside him. A moan sounded from forward.

"She's terribly ill," said Peggy. "Selim told me you had brought her aboard. What are you going to do with her, Archer?"

"That isn't the problem that's worrying me," he said. "It's what we're going to do with you."

CHAPTER XX

THE RACE TO KAPUKALIPELIPE

AT SUNSET the two snow-crowned domes of Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea on the big island of Hawaii were well abeam to leeward, lifting above the cliffs of the Kona coast. Addams altered the course to south-by-east somewhat reluctantly, but the wind was still forward of the beam, the *Wavecrest* reaching into the breeze, and in his judgment steadily outfooting the *Lei Lehua*.

"We should clear Kauna Point on this tack, that's the southwestern cape of Hawaii," he explained to Winton and Peggy, "by midnight, and clear the big island before morning. If the wind keeps steady from this quarter, as it promises to, it will be abeam when we change to a southeast course on a long leg for the island. At that we can hold up better than the other schooner. They got away with the wind behind them, but they must have run into a baffle-patch of shifts, and I'm sure we're catching them."

The *kona* gale showed no symptoms of blowing itself out; the sea remained a welter of waves that matched the gray sky. All suggestion of the tropics had vanished save the temperature, but all aboard the *Wavecrest* were content in the speed they were making, with one exception.

This was Henley's sister. Towards evening Peggy asked Addams to visit her and see if he could devise some means of relief.

"Her face is absolutely green," she said. "She can't speak, she can't even moan any more. I am afraid she's going to die."

"Good riddance," muttered Jim more than half in earnest. "She's a feminine Jonah. Don't see why you brought her aboard, Archer."

"Easiest way to keep tab on her," Addams answered, following Peggy to the stateroom where the woman lay helpless.

She still wore the nurse's costume, now crumpled and soiled, in which she had guarded Peggy in the vault. She had refused Peggy's ministrations and offers of clothing and glared at her and Addams as they entered, with the venom of a trapped wildcat. Addams prescribed and mixed a dose of bromide, but resistlessly weak as she was, her locked lips and teeth refused passage to the draft, while her eyes shot sparks of concentrated hate. Finally they left her, the medicine beside her.

"She won't eat, or can't," said Peggy. "Is there nothing we can do for her?"

Addams shrugged his shoulders. He had little sympathy for the woman or, though he admired the trait, Peggy's spirit of forgiveness.

"She'll pull through," he said. "A good siege of seasickness may help her general disposition. Though I doubt it," he added under his breath.

Ah Sing's hatchetmen, as Winton persisted in styling them, hourly proved themselves to be treasures. With Ah Sing, who had resigned the duties of the galley to Selim in favor of seamanship and the closer company of his fellows, they worked willingly and well, establishing themselves in the favor, not only of Addams and Winton, but of Peggy.

"I like them," she declared. "I don't care whether they're pirates or highbinders. They're absolutely good-natured and there's nothing sly about them. I'd trust myself with them willingly. That may be a woman's instinct and you may think it nonsense, but it's the way I feel. Selim believes in them too, and he's usually suspicious."

"I agree with you in the main, Peggy," said Addams. "Aside from Ah Sing's Masonic affiliations they have other things to bind them to our interests. They have small use for Tuan Yuck or the tong he represents, to begin with. Then they have a stake in the success of the enterprise that means a fortune to them. I understand it's a character of the highbinder, or hatchetman caste to be faithful to employers. I'd rather trust them than some of the crowd Henley has with him."

THE *Wavecrest* was being sailed on strict routine. The gale, while it could hardly be said to have moderated, had taken on an even pressure and the schconer, reaching gallantly, was easily managed. Peggy, who possessed a natural trick as helmswoman, an intuitive ability to favor the boat on mounting seas and save rudder play, took her daylight tricks at the wheel. Addams and Foo Chin divided the rest of the time, and Winton at regular intervals assumed charge of the deck.

"Sailing hard all through the twenty-four hours is half the battle," declared Addams. "I doubt very much whether they are sticking as close to it on the *Lei Lehua* as we are. They think you are still in the charge of our seasick friend, Peggy, and imagine Jim and myself locked safely up in that basement. So they are liable to take things fairly easy, especially nights. That's where most long-distance races are won—night-sailing."

Sixty hours out, with more than half the distance to the island covered, the storm began to abate. Addams looked anxiously at the sky, already showing blue through the ragged splits. The wind came in puffy gusts and the waves ran in a cross tumble of hesitancy. The barometer rose in slight but steady gradations, and the afternoon of the third day the breeze began to box the compass, blowing for brief periods from different directions.

The sky, a blue dome once more, showed signs of reforming trade-clouds on the after horizon towards the northwest, a surety of steady wind from that quarter before many hours had passed, though giving an immediate prospect of doldrums and delay.

Addams summed it up cheerfully.

"They've run into the same thing," he said. "It's even up. We'll make the most of what wind there is while it lasts. Set both jibs, Jim, and your fore and main gaff-topsails. We'll try the maintopmast staysails if the breeze holds. Even a knot or two may make all the difference. It's the first boat through that reef-entrance that counts."

He took the wheel and humored the schooner along, taking advantage of every flaw of wind. Presently he ordered in the useless topsails and staysails.

At last the fluttering flying-jib came down; main and fore sheets were run out in expectation of a following wind that hinted at fellowship. A school of dolphins, encouraged by the change of weather, gambolled about the ship, then, deciding it was a fine day for hunting, concentrated their activities in pursuing and devouring a flock of frantic flying-fish.

But the hoped-for breeze failed. The heave of the deep blue ocean died to pulsations on which the schooner wallowed with slatting blocks and ropes, the jerking booms dipping as she rolled, until the slack sheets were taken up and they resigned themselves to the inevitable.

With Foo Chin at the idle wheel, they got out the rifles and automatics and all hands practised at floating targets. Addams proved the master-marksman, with Foo Chin, when his opportunity came, a close second, once he got the balance of the weapons. Peggy, to her delight, proved not far behind either.

"Though there is no spare weapon for you, young lady," warned Addams, "and the moment trouble shows up, below you go as a non-combatant."

"I agree," said the girl, smashing the shoulder of a bottle as it danced past the counter, "but, if it does come to bullets, remember one of your very crackest sharpshooters is out of it, strictly on your account, not hers."

Later that day she found a guitar in the cabin and played accompaniments to Jim's tenor with the Chinese clustering by the foresail, listening eagerly as he sang:

> "Fifteen men on a dead man's chest,
>   Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!
> Drink and the devil have done for the rest,
>   Yo-ho! and a bottle of rum!"

At midnight they heard the Orientals chanting high-pitched ululations of their own, barbaric versions of the "Treasure Island" chanty.

All night the schooner tossed easily, often without steerage-way, and before sunrise on the fourth morning out, Addams anxiously sought for signs of wind. The horizon was clear and the piled up clouds gave promise that they refused to redeem. The noon reckoning showed their position at five hundred and fifty-four miles from Honolulu on their direct course, with a little less than two hundred and fifty still to cover.

"If we don't get a breeze soon," said Addams, "we'll not make the island until after dark tomorrow night. That will spoil whatever lead we may establish."

"This drifting 'round like a cork ravels the edge of my nerves," said Jim, chewing at an unlighted cigarette.

"They are probably in the same fix," replied Addams. "It can't last long by the look of things. It's starting to blow at last, I believe."

The sluggish roll of the water began to take on new life, forming into companies of crisp, bottle-blue waves, that advanced from trot to gallop, from gallop to charge as with the trades leading them on, they sent the schooner lunging along at top running speed. The main and fore booms were braced with tackles to help the steering in the following waves and offset the risk of jibing. Within an hour the *Wavecrest* was racing with the creaming seas, the wind strong and steady, swinging on as if imbued with the spirit of her crew.

THE log, once more revolving briskly beneath the surface, showed a speed of nine knots when it was hauled at two o'clock in the afternoon, a result that cheered the heads of the expedition mightily.

At Peggy's earnest solicitation, Henley's sister had been permitted to come on deck where, under the watchful eye of Selim, she sat by the rail awhile, then walked forward to the bows with a firmness of step that betokened a swift return to strength, since the head-seas had vanished and the *Wavecrest* ran on comparatively level keel. Selim had reported her appetite as fully restored.

Refusing to speak, or even look at her captors, she yet seemed in sullen fashion to have become reconciled to her condition. Keeping most of the time of her own accord to the privacy of the stateroom accorded her, she had been given the practical freedom of below-decks, with the Arab keeping an eye upon her general movements.

She strayed forward, gazing ahead steadily, until mid-afternoon, when she advanced toward the main companion. Every one else was on deck. Selim glanced in her direction and prepared to follow, suspicious of leaving her alone below, when a shout rang out from Loo Chow.

"Shippee!" he cried excitedly, pointing to leeward. "Shippee!"

Addams sprang to the shrouds, taking the deck-glasses with him as he mounted to the main-top. He focussed them eagerly in the direction indicated by the Chinaman.

"It's the *Lei Lehua*," he announced as he gained the deck. "We'll overhaul her before dark. "Get a spar into the leech of the fore-staysail, Jim, and hold her out. Bend on your flying-jib, it may help. Then wet down the sails."

Every effort was bent to get the last foot of speed out of the *Wavecrest*. The canvas was soaked with buckets of water from gaff to boom, the better to hold the breeze, and all gathered aft as an aid to the center of effort, watching the sails of the chase rise until the hull was seen at last.

The course they were holding promised to bring them closely alongside the *Lei Lehua*, and Addams, anxious to estimate the force against them, held it at the risk of a long-range bullet. As they neared the wood-schooner he sent Peggy mutinously below, a precaution fairly justified within a few minutes by the rip of a bullet through the mainsail, though they neither saw flash nor the almost imperceptible vapor of the smokeless powder, nor heard, with the strong after-wind, any report.

Foo Chin looked longingly toward Addams at the wheel, who shook his head.

"No good starting anything unless we

have to," he said. "I fancy that was a lucky shot. We'll clear them by half a mile. Keep under cover of the rail, all of you. If we fire back they'll lay across our course and try to force the issue by bullets. They've got us outnumbered. We can win better by outsailing them right now. I've got the weather gage of them, besides the speed, and we can afford to keep off and away.

"You can get the rifles up, though, Selim, in case we are put to it, and Jim, see if you can make out how many there are of them. They must have been able to recognize some of us or the vessel or they wouldn't have dared to fire. Naturally they're suspicious of anything in these waters, but if they'd made a mistake it might be costly. It's plain piracy as it is."

Winton mounted half-way up the rings of the mainmast and, concealed by the sail, scanned the craft they were rapidly overhauling.

"There's Tuan Yuck. He's got his glasses on us," he reported. "And Henley is walking deck like a lame duck. He's the one who fired, I guess; he's got a rifle. Look out!"

A bullet came singing over the water, but the range was too great for the accuracy of any one unaccustomed to long-distance sighting, and it passed over them harmlessly. The powerful marine-glasses enabled Winton to see clearly what was going on as the two schooners drew abeam, though over half a mile of water separated them.

"There's a row aboard," said Jim. "Tuan Yuck's kicking at Henley for firing. Looks like a general scrap. There are a dozen Chinamen to about six with Henley. Henley's going below now. I guess Tuan is boss of that expedition."

The *Wavecrest* slowly forged ahead of her broader bowed adversary, and the crew of the *Lei Lehua* set a clumsy square sail on the foremast in an endeavor to keep on even terms. Blanketed by the main and foresails it was largely ineffective, and the *Lei Lehua*, despite her bigger spread of canvas, fell steadily behind."

"Bad steering," said Addams. "She ought to do better than that."

"What's Tuan Yuck's idea in not trying to pick us off, Archer?" asked Winton. "He must know he's lost out."

"He's not the kind to take chances," answered Addams. "And he doesn't figure he's lost, yet. Murder is a more serious charge than robbery and, after all, we've only a treasure-trove right to the treasure. It's the property of the first finder, if he can keep it. Tuan Yuck probably figures on letting us dig it up and meeting us coming away. That's where the trouble will start if we can't outsail him hard enough in the next twenty-four hours to get the gold aboard and get clear of the island. He's still got chances to win. What's that?"

A shrill cry for help came from below.

"Take the wheel!" shouted Addams to Winton, and leaped for the cabin companionway.

EVEN as he did so a flying figure came from the forward ladder, followed by a gush of smoke. Henley's sister ran to the rail before she could be reached, and with a yell, topped it and sprang into the sea, going rapidly astern as she swam strongly toward the *Lei Lehua*. Her skirt, stripped off, showed free for a moment behind the woman who was striking out vigorously for her brother's craft.

Winton, deserting the wheel, dived down the main hatchway after Addams, in terror for what might have happened to his sister. Selim and Ah Sing, with Loo Chow, rushed to where clouds of black smoke rolled from the forward companion, as Foo Chin grasped the deserted wheel.

Below, Winton found Addams bending over Peggy, seated protestingly on the transom.

"I'm not hurt!" she said. "Not one bit. I screamed to warn you! The galley's on fire."

Smoke was filling the main cabin as they broke through the passageway between the staterooms to the kitchen, where they met Selim already throwing water on the blaze from buckets handed down by Ah Sing from Loo Chow.

"Get back in the main cabin, Peggy," ordered Addams. "Pass me those cushions, Jim; we can beat this out. Tell Foo Chin to keep her steady!"

In ten minutes the confusion was over and the fire out in the galley at the expense of charred walls, broken dishes, and some minor burns to the fire-fighters.

"We got it in time, thanks to you, Peggy," said Addams. "What happened?"

"I was sitting here looking at the chart after you sent me below," said the girl. "I thought she was in her room. Then I heard a noise in the galley and, thinking it was Selim, I went out to talk dinner with him. She was there. She had unscrewed the oil container from the stove and was sprinkling it over the floor and walls. I jumped for her as she struck a match, threw it down and ran forward. Before I could follow her the blaze stopped me. A breeze was coming down the companionway and I slammed the galley door and shrieked. What happened to her?"

"She's aboard with her precious brother by this time," said Addams. "We sighted the schooner just as she went below. She got to work while we were all on deck. You must have hurried her up and prevented her from thoroughly soaking the woodwork. As it is, we're not badly damaged and they've been delayed, picking her up. It was a desperate trick. We're well rid of her. Thank God, you're safe."

"Then I have been some use to earn my passage," asserted Peggy, pale but animated. "If I hadn't been a girl you wouldn't have sent me below and the fire might have got away from you."

Addams smiled at her. In his heart he wished her, brave and plucky as she was, safe ashore in Honolulu. Not merely Henley's shots, but Tuan Yuck's masterful repression of present hostilities seemed to him ominous signs of a probable and desperate struggle before they won free with the treasure that had lain waiting under the sand for sixty-five years for ownership.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TREASURE ISLE

THE breeze faltered as the sun went down and at midnight the *Wavecrest* ran into a windhole, slatting aimlessly about on the breathless sea till morning. Far behind them, barely seen from the masthead, Addams picked up the *Lei Lehua*, doggedly on their tracks.

All forenoon the fickle breezes played with them, filling them with alternate hope and disgust, and all day long the *Lei Lehua* haunted the horizon, sometimes rising under the impulse of a partial breeze until her sails were plain from the deck, then, as Æolus favored the *Wavecrest*, falling behind again.

There was nothing to do but make the best of it. They were in the region where the northern and southern trades are in constant dispute, and great patches of neutral, wind-forsaken sea halt the mariner. It was a gamble between the two boats in the lottery of the winds.

At times, while they rolled with slack tackle and slapping sails, failing progress enough for even steerage-way, they could see, half a mile away, a sharp squall ruffling the sea, and, struggling to reach it, behold it suddenly vanish as they touched the margin of the breeze.

They learned more of Tuan Yuck while they waited for weather favor. The head of the Quong Sing Tong had made a fortune in the days of the island monarchy by purchasing from the powers behind the throne a monopoly of the opium traffic. Under the bargain he smuggled and they closed too eager eyes, including their own. Henley had been one of his aides, and the house by the cemetery, with its secret tunnel, one of the main rendezvous of the smugglers. American acquisition had destroyed Henley's usefulness with strictly-carried-out regulations, and he had wandered afield.

Tuan Yuck, a large part of his revenue cut off, remained in Honolulu, still rich and, among his countrymen, powerful. Naturally, Henley, with none too much money to hire schooners or men, had applied to his former leader who had, Addams surmised, taken hold with a firm hand, promptly relegating Henley and his immediate associates to secondary positions in both the share of the expedition and the loot.

It was Tuan Yuck that Addams feared. The wily Oriental's methods were not of the blundering sort that Henley would have employed. He would work out moves and counter moves rather as an expert chess player would handle a problem, content to wait until the last moment for the master stroke.

Addams realized the Chinaman's absolute disregard of life, and determined, with Peggy on board, to avoid all life-and-death issues, even at the hazard of losing the gold. In actual combat they would be outnumbered and outshot four to one, and he knew that Tuan Yuck would leave no traces, once he got the upper hand.

There was one hope—to reach the island far enough ahead to enter the reef, secure the gold and leave before the *Lei Lehua* arrived. But that hope was dwindling with the inconstant weather, though the latter showed signs of mending as the day wore on to afternoon. They could not expect, however, to reach the island at best before sundown, and, by the time the treasure was aboard, the *Lei Lehua* would more than likely have established a blockade.

Addams sat, planning strategy against possible strategy, praying for a breeze, while the rest practised with the firearms. At one o'clock the northeast trades evidently decided upon an attempt at mastery. The wind came charging over the watery hills, mustering the plumy crests beneath them. Once more sheets tautened and can vas bellied, and a creamy wake showed swift progress.

"Here's where we start to sail!" cried Addams with infectious enthusiasm. The foresail was winged out to port, the mainsail to starboard. Jib and flying jib ballooned ahead with the forestaysail set as a spinnaker.

The canvas was soaked down and all hands went aft as the schooner, light-breasted as a swan, surged onward. In half an hour the *Lei Lehua* was invisible, lost below the horizon.

Addams took the wheel, bending every energy to avoid lost motion. There were no sheets to tend with the fast-following, urgent breeze, and the little complement of seven—Peggy, the two white men, the Arab and the three Chinese—gathered about the wheel in silence, watching the full-bellied sails and listening to the hiss of the foam beneath the counter with mutual delight.

At eight bells Addams sent Selim, as the lightest, up to the main-spreaders. For fifteen minutes he perched there, scanning the horizon ahead for a sign of land, behind for a possible reappearance of the *Lei Lehua*. Suddenly he gave a hail, pointing beyond the starboard bow.

Addams, relinquishing the wheel to Foo Chin, ran forward with the deck-glasses, followed by Jim and Peggy. Ahead, low on the skyline, showed a tiny blue dot.

Addams handed the glasses to Peggy.

"It's the island," he said. "We ought to make it by sundown. We *must*. We've got to get inside that reef by nightfall. They'll hesitate to risk it after dark. If we've any luck with tides we'll have all night to work in."

"And find them waiting for us when we come out, like the big boy around the corner," suggested Winton.

"That depends on circumstances we'll have to wait for," said Addams. "But I've been taking a leaf from Tuan Yuck's book of tactics and we'll find a way to handle that possibility. The important thing is to get into that lagoon."

THE land began to take shape before them. The sun had dropped among masses of clouds, sulfur-colored, enormous, against which the lift of the main crater showed in dull purple, with the promontory running to the cape, and beyond, the thimble-shaped islet, silhouetted against the yellow sky. The line of the reef showed snarlingly, and soon the thunder of its breakers sounded a warning.

"The opening's this side!" shouted Addams. "Take the wheel, Foo Chin, I'm going to the foretop to con in. Don't move a spoke till I tell you. Jim, you'll watch your jibs with Selim. Get in the foresheet now, all hands. Then stand by the main. Ah Sing, get forward there with the anchor!"

He volleyed his commands, then sprang to the foremast and climbed rapidly, holding to the halyards, using the rings as a ladder.

"Get in your sheets there!" he shouted, poised in the jaws of the gaff. "In with them! Stand by to go about. We'll make it on the port tack. Lively there! Now then, Foo Chin, hard alee!"

The schooner spun on her keel and sped, skirting the thundering reef.

Peggy looked up at the dominant figure, comparing him with the unsuccessful lawyer of less than a fortnight ago, and thrilled at the evidence of forceful manhood.

Great flocks of birds, disturbed by the advent of the schooner, wheeled dark against the sulfur sky, protesting at the rape of their privacy. As the schooner came under the lee of the main crater the wind failed.

"Ready about!" shouted Addams. "There she opens, straight ahead! Let her fall off a bit, Foo Chin. That's good. Steady she goes. Now—up with her. Bring her up, man! We're through! Down jibs, Jim. Over with that anchor, Ah Sing!"

He came to the deck, hand over hand, and snapped his orders. Main and fore sail came down to be furled, the headsails were snugged, a second anchor dropped astern—for, though they were partially protected by the cape, the reef opening was in the weather side—and the *Wavecrest* swung to her moorings in the lagoon as the first stars broke through overhead among the cloud masses, now dark as the land which only showed as an indeterminate smudge of black.

"Well, we're here first," announced Addams. "They won't be able to make that passage tonight, if they dared, even in a small boat. They'll not be here for two hours. The moon's not up till midnight and the sky's thick with clouds. They won't be able to sight the island and they'll hate to venture too close to it. If they did they couldn't pick out the passage, and, on top of that, we got in on the middle of the flood. The ebb will be running well after daylight and that's as good as a solid reef to us. Selim, get dinner right away. We'll tackle those caves tonight, while we're safe from interruption."

"Going around by boat or climb over the ridge?" asked Winton. "The caves are on the other side, aren't they?"

"It's six of one and half a dozen of another, as far as time goes," answered Addams. "But it's too risky to tackle the row in the dark. We might get an upset or badly hung up. Help me get out those torches, Jim, with the spare batteries for them."

Peggy emerged from the galley.

"Dinner is served," she announced. "Am I to be allowed to go?"

Winton started to demur, but Addams checked him.

"We're safe as a church till morning," he said. "No reason why she shouldn't help us work out the secret, that I can see."

"Thank you," said Peggy. "After all it's my cave. Come on and eat, if you can. I'm far too excited for food."

CHAPTER XXII

THE HIDDEN HIEROGLYPHICS

THEY left Selim aboard the *Wavecrest*, with orders to climb to the ridge of the promontory as soon as it began to get light. From there he was to warn them of the approach of the *Lei Lehua*. It was difficult work making their way down to the little beach where the gold-schooner had been cast up sixty-five years before with Fellowes and the older Henley as the only survivors.

The moon was not due until long after midnight; the scanty stars, cloud-shrouded, gave little aid, and they picked their way with the light of electric torches. The three Chinamen carried iron rods for sounding the sand, also picks and shovels and crowbars. They seemed impassive as ever, but the rest of the little party was high-strung with excitement at the closing-in of their adventure. Addams felt Peggy's small hand trembling with eagerness as he helped her down the trails.

Once they paused for rest before they essayed the final clamber to the beach and sat together on the edge of the lava cliff. The sky overhead was purple velvet, spangled with golden stars; the sea beyond the reef seemed ebony. Ghostly waves rose against the barrier, and, robbed of their crests, hissed across the lagoon to break at last in phosphorescent, lacey foam. They were in the saddle of the promontory with the desolate crater peak splitting the sky like a great miter to their left, and the lower headland to their right.

"I feel as if I were part of an illustration to the 'Arabian Nights,'" declared Peggy, "the sister of Ali Baba, if he had one, about to enter the robbers' cave."

"I hope the *sesame* will work," said Addams.

"You haven't forgotten it, have you?" she asked. "A big fish, a canoe, five men and a ring. What are you so quiet about, Archer?"

"Thinking of magic words that open treasure-houses," he said. "There's one treasure-house I've wanted to enter for a long time, Peggy, and it begins to look as if I might have the right to try, at last."

He felt the girl's hand slip caressingly into his.

"I think you could always have found a way in, if you had tried," she said. "Even treasures don't want to be shut up all the time, you know."

"If we don't find the gold I think I'll stay behind on the island and turn hermit," he said jestingly.

"That would be very disagreeable, I should think," she answered. "What would we do when we quarreled with no one to be sympathetic but the shellfish?"

"Did you say '*we*' Peggy?" he asked.

"Light-ho!" sung out Jim.

"Where away?" asked Addams, as he and Peggy rose and faced seaward.

"Right there, just below the Big Dipper," replied Winton. "I thought it was a star at first."

Addams picked up the light, rising and falling, lost now and then, to appear again close to the horizon.

"It's the *Lei Lehua*," he said. "She'll get close enough to hear the breakers pretty soon and stay off and on till daylight. Come on let's get busy!"

They clambered down the lava to the little beach. The flood-tide that had covered it was beginning to recede, leaving a narrow strip against the cliff in which they expected to find the caves. It was very dark still, a warm, almost tangible darkness, the ebony cliff on one hand and the dark sea on the other, out of which came the phosphorescent combers, seething to their feet. And it was very quiet, so that they talked involuntarily in whispers, secure from interruption or from being overheard as they were.

Addams had provided half a dozen electric torches with bull's-eye lenses and batteries of unusual strength. With these they sprayed the black face of the cliff with light, searching for the caves told of by Fellowes.

Peggy was the discoverer of the first of them, a low archway chocked by sand.

"There are six," she said, "all close together, with the gold in the third, counting seaward from the cape."

The rest of the openings were discovered, all level with the floor of the beach. Wet sand and shingle, with clumps of seaweeds still damp, made it evident that at high tide the floors were covered. Spiny crabs with long pipe-stemmed leg's scuttered away indignant under the electric rays and scraped across the shingle. The height of the archways varied, but, at the fourth, the third from seaward, there was room to enter without even Foo Chin having to bow his head, and ample space inside for them all to assemble.

The floor was covered with hard-packed sand, the lower walls festooned with weeds in streamers and pods that cracked under foot with reports like pistol shots.

EAGERLY they swept the walls with the blue-white electric rays. The rock around and above them was covered with the rudely graven pictographs of men and animals, and symbols that might hold some hidden meaning, or represent the vagaries of some embryo Rodin of the South Seas.

Foot by foot they exploited the crude designs but nowhere could they find anything that the vividest imagination could twist into an interpretation of a fish. Addams had explained the signs they were looking for to the Chinamen and all feverishly searched the rock chamber for the totem that should show where the gold lay hidden.

The gold lust had possession of all of them, white and yellow, man and girl. They scraped off the shiny seaweed with flat stones and fingernails till the rock was bare, without success. The eyes of all shown unnaturally as they reflected the angled beams of the torches, all were breathing hard and dripping with perspiration in the muggy cave as they finally faced Addams in questioning despair.

"You're sure it was the third cave from the seaward, from the cape, that Fellowes said?" he asked Peggy. "Wasn't it the third from the crater?"

"I'm sure he said from the Cape," she answered wearily, tears of vexation in her eyes."

"Let's take a look anyway," said Jim.

Outside, the air felt comparatively cool and refreshing. The lazy phosphorescent sea idly rolled the shingle back and forth as it had done through all the ages, sounding a lullaby to its own rocking of the world's great cradle, the sea. The sky had cleared somewhat and the stars glowed in the sky, reflected in the lagoon, serene above the adventurers who sought for the gold that meant so much of comfort and happiness, and even of love, so successful has man been in applying one currency for all things desirable.

The neighboring cave was smaller and easily covered. The carvings were scarcer and there was no sign of the group for which they were seeking. It looked as if their quest was to be fruitless after all. Addams looked at his watch. It was close to midnight. They had been searching for over two hours. The tide was well out now, rock pools rising here and there from the crescent beach.

As they came out of the smaller cave the moon looked over the ragged rim of the crater-bowl and threw ragged shadows clear-cut on the sand, its reflection shining in the pools. By one of these a dark spur was upthrust sharply. Addams walked over to it curiously.

"It's wood!" he cried. "Come over here, Jim and Peggy!"

A new note of hope rang in his voice as they joined him.

"It's the stem of a vessel about the size of the *Wavecrest*," he said, "deep-buried and left here long ago. See how smooth and sharp it's worn. That's Fellowes' schooner, or all that's left of it; enough for a sign-post to tell us he was here sixty odd years ago."

It looked as if his conjecture were a true one and their despondency lifted.

"You see," said Addams, "the beach has been piling up here for all those years. The keel is probably fifteen feet below us, covered with sand—so are the original floors of the caves. You remember what Fellowes said about there being carvings on the floors? All we've seen is sand. We've got to dig down!"

They raced back to the original cave, the third from seaward, and probed into the hard sand with the long iron rods. Some ten feet down they struck the hard rock.

"The gold was probably buried close to the wall," said Addams. "The question is, which? We'll have to trust to luck again; we haven't got too much time. Let's start a trench at the right. Peggy, will you repolish the glass of those torch batteries?"

They went at it with a will, pick and shovel, to expose the wall to bed-rock. It was hard work. The sand was firmly packed and beaten by the tides and they were soon soaked in perspiration. The displaced sand piled up behind them as they toiled, and they had to break shifts to take it out to the beach every now and then and make room for their efforts.

As they neared the rock Peggy got down into the trench and brushed away the sand that still clung to the rough surface, searching with a torch for the signs that marked the treasure. Carvings were disclosed as they dug, grouping more thickly the nearer they got to the original floor of the cave.

"Here's my fish!" cried the girl triumphantly at last. "And here are the five men! Archer! Jim! It's true! Oh dig—dig—dig! Give me a spade, one of you!"

They swiftly uncovered the inscription, finding it complete, with the canoe and the circle, and cleared on down to solid rock. Addam's pick broke through an opening in the cave wall and he thrust an arm through the sand and reached an inner chamber, back of an overhanging curtain of stone that formed the false wall of the cave.

He groped about, full-length at the bottom of the trench, while the others, sand-spattered and wet, anxiously watched him.

"I've found something," he said, withdrawing his hand and forearm. "Give me that torch, Peggy."

He dug furiously at the hole with the blade of the sheath-knife he carried in his belt, scooping out the sand. His full arm disappeared in the cavity.

"HERE it is," he announced. "It's hard—yes, it's wood, and here's a hoop about it. We've found it!"

He climbed out of the trench and slipped out to look at the tide while Winton and the Chinamen dug furiously and Peggy, perched on a pile of sand, a torch in either hand, illumined their efforts.

Outside, Addams found the moon sailing high, obscured now and then by cloud-drift through which the stars peered, still bright; though he sensed the vague trembling of the sky-curtain that, in the tropics, presages the swift uprush of dawn.

The tide was still ebbing, guarding securely the entrance to the reef, as one by one the stout wooden boxes, stained and rusty of iron bands, yet still resisting damp and rot, were brought from the cave and set down on the beach.

Winton seated himself on one of them, mopping his forehead.

"Fellowes said they weighed two hundred pounds apiece, didn't he," he asked. "I don't believe it! Don't believe they weigh a quarter of that, and half an hour ago I thought I was just about fagged out. Funny how light gold is when you own it."

"We don't own it yet, Jim," said Addams. "Here comes the dawn. We've got to get back to the schooner."

The eastern sky was swiftly stained with red. The glittering star-points turned to ash, then disappeared, and the wan moon faded to the semblance of a lifeless gray wafer. Selim called from the ridge—

"Ship, he come now!"

"All right," said Addams, looking swiftly about him. "We've got an hour to hide this stuff where they'll never think of it."

"Hide it?" said Peggy.

"We can't get clear with it now," answered Addams. "If that crowd saw us packing them over to the *Wavecrest* that would be the end of it. Anyhow we could never get them up that cliff until they were ashore. We'll have to bury them again, temporarily. I've got the place. We'll sink them in one of these pools under the seaweed. Take the big one by the stem of Fellowes' schooner. That'll serve as pointer. When the tide comes in they'll be safer than they ever were in the cave.

"Then we'll tackle our visitors. They'll never dream of looking for them under the water, and I've got a plan to put them off the scent altogether."

They carried the heavy boxes to the rock-rimmed pool and sunk them to the bottom, thrusting them beneath great beards of weed that effectually hid them from all view, save that of the startled and protesting rock-fish, and left the incoming tide to play guardian.

Then, suddenly conscious of exhaustion and the need of food, they climbed back to the ridge. Beyond the reef, the *Lei Lehua* was tacking up for the entrance.

They hurried with Selim to the shore of the lagoon and reached the *Wavecrest* before the other schooner had negotiated the passage.

"Down below with you, Peggy!" cried Addams. "Orders! You can help Selim get us something hot to eat and drink. They know you're aboard, of course, but there's no good showing yourself. They're a tough crowd, but I think we can handle them. You're all tired out. Better try and get some sleep."

"Sleep!" exclaimed the girl indignantly. "Sleep! While you're fighting off that crowd of pirates?"

"There isn't going to be any fighting, for the present, I think," said Addams. "I'm going to try a bluff on them. I'm going to tell them we couldn't find it. It may work. Help me get the rifles loaded, Jim; it's as well to be prepared, and we'll serve out the automatics."

The *Lei Lehua*, in somewhat lubberly fashion, made the lagoon in safety, and dropped anchor about a quarter of a mile away. There was a commotion of orders and men handling the sails, which were finally furled in bungling style.

A boat was launched and pulled toward the *Wavecrest*. In the stern were Tuan Yuck and Henley, with four Chinese effectively handling the oars.

CHAPTER XXIII

ADDAMS PLAYS AT CHESS WITH TUAN YUCK

ADDAMS went to the rail as the boat came alongside.

"Keep your boathook clear there!" he shouted. "What do you want?"

"We want to come aboard and have a talk with you, Mr. Addams," said Henley, "me and Tuan Yuck here. You've been too smart for us this first trick, but the game ain't played out by a long shot. There's twenty men with us who ain't feelin' over an above good-tempered. Might's right when it comes to hard cash. We're four to one. Better let us come aboard for a chat. Maybe we can come to terms."

Addams appeared to be reflecting.

"Who am I dealing with?" he demanded. "One's enough!"

Tuan Yuck looked up imperturbably.

"You'll deal with me," he said.

"Then you can come," returned Addams, "but you alone. Come 'round to the side ladder."

Henley started to bluster, but a look from Tuan Yuck quieted him. The boat came around to the starboard side, the Chinaman ascended the ladder, looking keenly about him and at Addams' orders the men rowed a short distance away and lay on their oars.

Tuan Yuck surveyed Ah Sing and his two compatriots with the hint of a smile. His eyes took in everything with a swift sweep, from deck to mast-trucks. Then he turned to Addams and Winton.

"Shall we talk on deck?" he asked.

Addams nodded.

"I have to congratulate you," he said. "I have a suspicion as to how you got out. Of course you had trailed that blundering fool Henley with his idiotic disguise he was so proud of. I am glad the young lady is no longer uncomfortable. But it seems to me a dangerous place for her aboard. It may have occurred to you the same way?"

Addams and Winton kept silent.

"We overlooked this schooner, too," went on the Chinaman. "I understood her owner was on the coast and she could not be obtained. That was more of Henley's asininity. I only came into the matter at the last moment. I regret that Henley should have fired at you. It was unnecessary. Bloodshed is unpleasant—unless as a last resort."

"Well," said Addams, as Tuan Yuck paused, "I don't yet see the object of the visit."

"I think you do," said the Oriental. "I think you do. Let us reason it out. Here is a treasure—three-quarters of a million dollars. You claim it, basing your claim principally upon the fact that you know where it is, gaining your information from a man who, in conjunction with Henley's father, buried it, after stealing it from some unfortunate miners.

"In a way, you condone the robbery by taking, or attempting to take, the treasure. But Henley's son, as a direct legatee, has a claim at least equal to yours. Both the elder Henley and Fellowes were rascals. In my philosophy, which applies merely to the span of my own existence, I see no reason why I, learning of the treasure and being appealed to by Henley to finance and play executive to his expedition, should allow you to stand between me and my share of the money—particularly as I happen to have the *force majeure*. Through Henley's sister I have an accurate description of your armament and the personnel of your crew. I assure you it is in no way competent, compared with mine.

"You have a cook and a couple of hatchetmen aboard—" he looked contemptuously at Ah Sing and his fellows, who stood forward, watching the discussion—"while I have fourteen excellent gunmen—to say nothing of Henley's riff-raff, who will fight well enough when primed with whisky and the prospect of gold.

"We both have a woman aboard. They are of different fibers——"

"You can leave all mention of Miss Winton out of the talk," broke in Addams coldly.

"As you like. I merely wish to point out where you stand. As Henley said, it's four to one. I am willing to take a sporting chance. Turn over the gold and you go clear. If you think it worth while, you can inform the authorities of the—outrage. They will not find us."

"Do you think," retorted Winton, "after all you've done and tried to do to us, that we are going to stand by and calmly turn over the gold to that set of lawless ragamuffins you've brought with you?"

" 'Lawless' hardly applies in this case, Mr. Winton," said the Chinaman blandly. "Law rarely applies to the possessors of sufficient wealth. Gold makes the law. And, as far as that law goes, I intend to administer it. If I thought my men would agree to giving you some share of the treasure as a recompense for your trouble and expense, I would agree to it. As it is——"

He spread his arms in the Oriental equivalent to a shrug.

"Is that what Henley meant by coming to terms?" asked Addams.

"I am making the terms!" answered Tuan Yuck. "Do you agree to them?"

"As far as the gold is concerned," said Addams, "you are welcome to it."

A questioning flare shot from Tuan Yuck's opening eyes.

"If you can find it," went on Addams. "I can't."

"What do you mean?" asked the Chinaman, his voice harsh with suspicion.

Addams shrugged his shoulders.

"You're welcome to look for it," he said. "I have—all last night. You'll see where we dug for it, according to Fellowes' instructions, in the cave on the other side of the ridge there. Perhaps the old man blabbed of it. Some one may have forestalled us, or Fellowes may have dreamed it. Henley will tell you he was half crazy."

He spoke carelessly, while Tuan Yuck watched him with narrow-lidded, calculating eyes.

"It naturally wouldn't be in the cave if you already had it aboard," said the Chinaman.

"I'll give you my word of honor it isn't," answered Addams. "You can look, if you want to. As for the caves—there are six of them. I searched the one it was supposed to be in. I've made up my mind it isn't there. If you want to, you can search the vessel. It's easily overhauled. There's no hold. You can satisfy yourself in ten minutes if you think it will save a row, though, to tell you the truth, I wouldn't mind one. The score's against me so far.

"One thing I'll promise you," he went on. "The first one of your outfit that touches this deck will do it lying down, and he'll not get up again. Also, he will have company. I'll leave you the island to scratch to pieces. We're going to leave on the next tide."

Tuan Yuck's imperturbability seemed to have been pierced by Addams' nonchalance. A film seemed lifted from eyes that looked venomous as a snake's.

"I don't think I'd try to leave, if I were you," he said. "I'm going to look for the gold. It will be better for your sake if we find it. I can not answer for my men. But don't try and leave the lagoon."

"I don't intend to, till the next tide," said Addams. "Do you want to look over the ship?"

"If you will not consider it an aspersion on your honor," said Tuan Yuck, "I think it would be advisable."

Addams conducted him below, where he bowed to Peggy, who watched him with indignant eyes. With Selim they raised the transoms and the bilge-boards, looked into staterooms, fore-peak and, by the aid of an electric torch, the lazarette, until the baffled Chinaman was convinced that the treasure was not on the schooner.

Apparently unmoved, he returned on deck and hailed the boat.

"Take my advice about leaving," he said, as he descended the side-ladder, and, with an imperative gesture to his men, ignoring Henley's questioning, was rowed swiftly back to the *Lei Lehua*.

"What's the idea?" asked Winton. "I don't quite get the hang of it."

"I was playing for a chance to get clear," Addams answered. "We can stand off and on for a week, or even two, come back when the coast is clear and dig up the money. They'll not dream of looking for it under tide-water. We can salve it any time inside of a month without trouble. I've put a strong suggestion in his mind that some one has been here beforehand. It's a doubt I've had in my own right along. They'll get tired of digging and may start quarreling among the crowd before long."

"How about not letting us get away?"

"We can stay here as long as they can. And we can keep them from boarding us. They're going to try and blockade us now, I fancy."

A boat was towing the *Lei Lehua* slowly nearer the reef entrance, evidently with a view to blocking the exit of the *Wavecrest*. Another boat was pulling for the shore. The schooner dropped anchor in her new position and a second boat left for the beach. Two men were left aboard, two more, rifle in hand, patrolled the edge of the lagoon. The rest, clambering up the rocks of the promontory, presently disappeared. Henley's sister apparently remained aboard.

"They intend to keep us where we are," said Addams. "I'll appoint watches and we can try and get some sleep. If that crowd gets drinking they may nerve themselves up to try and start something."

THE day passed quietly. The men on the beach kept their patrol and the glint of a rifle barrel showed from the *Lei Lehua* as one of the men occasionally came to the side to survey the *Wavecrest*. Toward sunset the crowd came trooping back from the other side of the promontory, evidently tired and discouraged, talking and arguing in groups of two or three as they climbed down to the beach.

There they surrounded Henley and Tuan Yuck and an animated and apparently angry discussion took place. A boat rowed off to the ship and came back with provisions, while a big fire was lighted. The crowd settled around the blaze while the food was being cooked, drinking from bottles brought from the schooner It was too far to distinguish more than a murmur that rose and fell, but the gesticulations showed plainly that the *Wavecrest* was the cause of discussion.

On board the latter they prepared for a possible invasion. The Chinamen took the situation calmly, taking the guns served out to them with smiles that bespoke only pleasant anticipation and assurance of handling any trouble that might break.

All stayed on deck after dark, watching the crowd about the fire. The discussion died down for a while after the men had eaten, and there were attempts at singing in broken choruses. Then Henley got upon his feet and spoke to the ring, and in a moment they were upon their feet, surging in upon him with angry gestures.

"It is like a scene played in pantomime," Peggy declared; "played for us as audience."

"But not necessarily for our benefit," said her brother. "Halloo! They're going off to the schooner."

"Look out for a visit," said Addams. "Peggy, you'd better get below."

"I can shoot as well as any of you," she demurred.

"Captain's orders!" said Addams, and she obeyed reluctantly.

But there was no occasion for alarm. Only one boat came near them to jeer across the water and then go to the schooner. The night passed without warning. Just at dawn, as the tide changed to flood, there was a stir aboard the *Lei Lehua*, the sound of a winch, the rattle of a chain and the bustle of hoisting sails. Tuan Yuck stood aft giving orders.

"I believe they've given it up," said Addams. "We can hardly hope for that, though it may be a bluff."

But the schooner hoisted her headsails and passed through the reef, standing away close-hauled on a long off-shore tack, apparently bound for Honolulu.

CHAPTER XXIV

TUAN YUCK MOVES

ADDAMS waited until the *Lei Lehua*, close-hauled to the north, was hull down.

"The wind's pretty light," he said. "They couldn't get back now inside of three hours. I wonder what's happened. It seems almost too good to be true. I suppose they've quarreled amongst themselves. Henley is likely to have a nasty trip back."

"You don't think they could have found the gold?" asked Peggy.

Addams smiled at her. It looked as if his strategy had succeeded, and he could afford to relax the strain that had lined his face and taxed strength and nerves to a limit the girl was far from suspecting.

"I don't think so," he said. "Anyway, we'll find out. This is our chance to get clear. We'll send a boat around to get the gold. They can set you and Jim and me ashore to cut across the ridge. It will take two trips to transport it. Let's get started. Once at sea, and the treasure below decks, we're through with trouble!"

The port boat was launched, putting the three ashore, while Ah Sing and his countrymen rowed around the cape. Selim was left on board. In case of the sudden return of the schooner or any signs of alarm he was to fire three shots from his rifle and, if possible, warn them from the ridge. All went armed. Even Peggy carried a spare automatic pistol. Addams was determined to carry out precaution to the finish, clear though the coast seemed to be.

The day was clear and cloudless, the sun brilliant. Flocks of birds wheeled crying in the blue, and the weather seemed a harbinger of ultimate success.

As the three neared the cliff, after watching the boat disappear behind a headland, a figure came hesitatingly from the rocks and advanced haltingly toward them, dragging one foot over the sand. It was Henley, wobegone, crestfallen, one hand raised in deprecation of expected hostilities.

He essayed a cringing smile as Addams, covering him with his automatic, ordered him to keep his distance.

"I can't do you any harm," whined Henley, holding his hands high above his head. "I was afraid to come out at first, knowing you held hard thoughts against me, but I'm down. I'm at your mercy. I had a right to a share of the gold, if any one did, but it's gone. Fellowes has played us all a dirty trick. He's laughing in his grave at all of us now, the canting hypocrite!"

"Why are you left behind?" asked Addams sternly.

"Why? Because I trusted to a slant-eyed, yeller-skinned cur who turned on me after all I've done for him. Why? Because I'm marooned. That's why. Marooned on an island where there ain't no food, nor no water! Left us to die of starvation and thirst, —— them! Without a drop or crum!"

He shook his clenched fists in imprecation.

"I didn't have you treated hard, miss," he appealed to Peggy. "I left my sister behind to see you wasn't left without food. You won't see me left here to die, will you?"

He threw himself on the sand, his hands clutching at the grit, a spectacle of despair.

"Who do you mean by 'us'?" asked Addams. "Is your sister here too?"

Henley, still groveling, raised his head. "She's back there," he said. "You ain't going to be hard on a woman?"

From a niche in the cliff-wall came the woman, clad in sailor's clothes like a man, grimly defiant as she walked toward them.

"We can't leave them to die, Archer," pleaded Peggy.

Addams hesitated. It was no time to consider the ultimate disposition of the miserable pair, though thoughts of punishment for their treatment of Peggy in particular, were still paramount. At the sight of the girl's face he yielded, temporarily.

"We won't leave them here," he said. "Get up, man!" he told Henley. "We'll take you back to Honolulu. You," he added to the woman, "can stay here. We can use your brother."

Henley was profuse in his thanks and protestations of willingness and repentance. Addams cut him short, ordering him to lead the way across the promontory. The woman retreated to the shadow of the cliff, silent, uncompromising, as she had advanced.

THE tide was falling when they gained the beach, the spur of the timber of Fellowes' schooner awash on the surf. Presently the boat with the Chinese came around the cape and made a landing on the sand, the Orientals hauling her up a little way on the beach, close to the remnant of the wreck and the pool where they had left the treasure, its rocks already showing above the retreating tide.

The men waded in to their knees, Henley helping with the rest, despite the handicap of his lame foot and a visible lack of strength in handling the heavy boxes as they retrieved them from the weedy pool and set them one by one beside the boat.

Peggy watched the work for a while, then wandered to the caves to see what evidence she could find of the disappointing search by the men from the *Lei Lehua*.

As the last box but one was set beside the rest and they halted for a brief respite, Henley sat limply on the thwart of the boat.

"A smart trick, Mr. Addams," he said. "I might have known you was too smart for me at the beginning. And you've fooled Tuan Yuck too. It galled him and I'm glad of it."

He put his hand to his side, breathing heavily.

"Might I rest a bit?" he asked. "I ain't as husky as I was a few years ago."

At Addams' nod he limped up the beach to the cliff and lay prone on the sand. Ah Sing and Foo Chin started to bring up the last box, Addams and Winton standing by the boat. Loo Chow, who had cut his bare foot on some coral, seated himself on a rock near Henley and examined his wound, binding it up in his neckerchief.

There was a sudden cry and Peggy came flying toward the boat from the caves, calling as she ran. A volley of shots sounded from behind her, the bullets sending up little spurts of sand. One thudded into a box, another hummed by Addams' ear as he snatched a rifle from where they had placed them in the bottom of the boat, and commenced firing from his hip at four men who came from the mouth of the caves, pumping their Winchesters as fast as they could work the mechanism.

One of them fell sprawling on the sand.

"Get behind the boxes, Peggy," cried Addams as he reached her. "I'll be with you right away."

He retreated slowly, firing at the men, who had halted before the fusillade that now came from Winton, Ah Sing and Foo Chin. A bullet flipped through the side of Addams' shirt, and another plowed through the sand at his foot, ripping part of the sole from his shoe as he gained the barricade of the treasure chests in safety, and dropped down beside Peggy.

"Henley's done for Loo Chow," said Winton. "He knifed him!"

Addams glanced over his shoulder to where Loo Chow sat huddled against his rock, the bright blood showing against his blouse. A bullet struck one of the iron hoops of a box with a *spang* and fell spent in the midst of them, coming from the direction of Henley, who had snatched Loo Chow's automatic from his belt and, hidden behind a boulder, was firing at them.

A growl came from Foo Chin. He pointed his rifle upward at the cliff and fired. Some one in the act of dropping down a rifle to Henley shrieked and spun about, falling, saving a drop to the beach by clutching at the edge of the precipice.

"It's Henley's sister," cried Peggy. "He's killed her."

"Ugh!" grunted the big Chinaman, refilling his magazine.

He spoke in rapid dialect to Ah Sing, who interpreted:

"He say he no know she woman. She dress all same man. Now she ghost."

Foo Chin sighted rapidly and fired once more at Henley who was creeping out from the shelter of his rock to gain the rifle. The bullet hit the weapon as Henley's hand was closing on the butt, and he swiftly sought cover again.

For a moment there was a lull. Henley appeared to have exhausted his ammunition. Peggy seized the pause to explain.

"I went into the cave," she said, "our cave, and walked right on to them. They hadn't heard me and they were all on the sand crawling toward the entrance. Then I ran and they started firing."

"You've probably saved the day," said Addams. "That's a return move of Tuan

Yuck. He left them behind to take us by surprise, with Henley to talk us into thinking they had left for good. He didn't leave his own men, I notice, but put it up to Henley. We'll have to get out of this or we'll have the rest of them back.

A WARNING came from Winton. The sagging body of Loo Chow seemed to have taken on life, moving jerkily. It fell forward as Henley, whipping the belt from his victim, yelled in defiance while he secured the extra cartridges. Only his arm showed from the shelter of the rock, but Foo Chin sent the sand flying close to it, evincing his disappointment at the miss by chattering to Ah Sing.

"He say he get him bimeby, sure," said the latter. "He speak, Loo Chow all same his blotheh. Henley he kill Loo Chow, Foo Chin he kill Henley, sure."

"If we could only get him out from that rock," said Addams, "we could get the boat loaded and away. Those chaps in the cave are a lot of cowards. One of us can keep the three of them back. Henley's too close to be pleasant and he's making better shooting of it."

The rock behind which Henley was hidden was heavily fringed with seaweed and it was hard to tell from where the next shot would come. The body of Loo Chow lay in front and to one side of it, and they were repugnant at the thought of hitting it with their own bullets.

Meanwhile, as Addams said, Henley was getting the range. They moved two of the boxes to bulwark them, but the angle of fire was still acute enough for a well-aimed shot to do damage.

The three in the cave, who had left their comrade to struggle on the sand till he died, fired at desultory intervals, but they appeared afraid to expose themselves and the bullets went wild.

A shot rang out from the summit of the cliff. The figure of the woman still lay there but, close by, Selim, brought from the schooner by the firing, was making a target of Henley with his rifle. The Arab was not the best of shots, but the sand showed where he was finding the range.

Henley, finding the cross-fire too hot for safety, sprang from his shelter and ran in uneven leaps, with surprising swiftness for his lameness, under the protection of the cliff from Selim, dodging from loose boulder to boulder as they fired at the flying mark. They were out of range of his automatic now and Addams, anxious to get away before Tuan Yuck returned, issued new orders.

"Keep the cave-mouth covered, Jim," he said. "Peggy, see if you can find it. That's fine!" he cried, as a bullet from the rifle he had handed her clipped the rock at the entrance to the cavern and ricochetted inside. "Keep firing; don't aim too high. That's better! Any sign of the ship?" he shouted up at Selim.

The Arab, still taking ineffectual potshots at Henley, shook his head.

"Stay there and keep a lookout!" called Addams. "Now, Jim, let's get the boat into the water and some of these boxes into it. Keep firing, Peggy. Lend a hand, Ah Sing. Where are you going, Foo Chin?"

The giant Chinaman, who had been shooting steadily at Henley, dodging ever farther away among the boulders, threw down his rifle and, bent at the hips, glided cliffward. He reached the body of Loo Chow and lifting it easily brought it back and laid it on the sand by the boat. He spoke rapidly to Ah Sing, ignoring Addams' question, then, doubled at the waist, started after Henley.

"He say, we take Loo Chow to ship. He go kill. Bimeby he come back," said Ah Sing.

Foo Chin continued toward Henley in the face of a furious fire from the latter's automatic. Henley reached the last of the rocks, broke into the open and disappeared around a buttress of the rocks, Foo Chin in swift pursuit.

The three men got the boat into the water under cover of Peggy's rifle and carried half the cases aboard.

"Now, Peggy," said Addams, "you go in. Give me the rifle."

He took it, slipping in fresh cartridges.

"Aren't you coming?" she asked.

"Next trip," he said. "Jim and Ah Sing will row you to the schooner, and then Ah Sing will come back for me and the rest of the gold—and Loo Chow's body," he added in an aside to Ah Sing, who nodded understandingly.

"Please, Peggy," he asked as the girl hesitated. "Make her lie down, Jim. I'll hold these chaps back easily enough, but they are liable to take a shot at you as you pass them."

Winton picked up his sister in his arms and waded out with her to where Ah Sing held the boat on the tide. He set her in the stern with orders to crouch below the gunwale, which she mutinously obeyed, and took his place on the forward thwart, his rifle across his knees, while Ah Sing took up the oars and put his sturdy back into the swing, keeping well out in the lagoon.

A spurt of fire came from the cave, answered by a shot from Winton. A man pitched headlong from the cave-mouth on to the sand and Winton's voice came triumphantly over the water—

"Got him!"

The two remaining, either miscalculating their numbers or in desperation, came from cover and, one kneeling, one standing, took deliberate aim at the boat. The bullet from one rifle struck the water ahead, the other gun was never fired. Addams hit the kneeling man squarely between the shoulders, so that he fell forward on the shingle and lay still. A shot from Selim on the cliff went wild. The lone survivor turned, his hands held high.

"I QUIT!" he called, throwing down his rifle. "I quit!"

"Walk up toward me till I tell you to stop," said Addams. "Keep your hands above your head!"

The man obeyed. It was the broken-nosed ex-pugilist who had met Henley at the wharf on the arrival of the steamer. Covering him with his automatic, Addams searched him for arms, relieving him of a knife.

"I'll work my way back," said the man, "if you'll take me."

"Not you," replied Addams. "You'll stay here till your own schooner comes back for you. Selim!"

The Arab came down from the cliff at his call and gathered up the rifles of the four men and the one that had been thrown down to Henley by his sister.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked the man.

"I told you," said Addams. "You wait here. Get into that cave and stay there!"

"Hold on, boss. That ain't right. You've got the goods. You're going to get away with it all. If they see you leaving they won't come after me at all. We didn't figure on the young lady finding us. We took that cave because you'd dug it up already. Tuan Yuck said you might be playin' a trick and he give Henley and us the chance to make good.

" 'If the treasure's there,' he said, 'you let 'em show you where it is an' ambush 'em.' He's a sly one, he is. He didn't take the chances. Waited, to let us do all the dirty work. You want to get out of it as quick as you can or he'll be back. But he won't take me. He's got no use for losers."

The boat was coming around the cape once more, Ah Sing rowing hard.

"You'll let me go along, guv'nor?" said the man.

Addams hesitated. His inclinations were to leave the wretch to die or live on the island, as chance might determine. But they needed a man to take the place of Loo Chow, dead at his feet.

"I won't promise what I'll do with you at Honolulu," he said.

"All right, sir. I'll do anything I'm told to."

Ah Sing shouted over his shoulder as he came nearer.

"Ship he come back! Ship he come back!"

"How close, Ah Sing?" asked Addams, as they loaded the remainder of the gold and then laid Loo Chow's body on the bottom boards.

"He come from this-a-way!" Ah Sing pointed north. "I think he made plenty one big ring, come back all same behind mountain so we no can see. Now he sail along leef, plenty slow. No much wind."

Addams looked around for Foo Chin, loath to leave him. There was no one in sight and he had heard no sound of shots.

"Foo Chin, he come bimeby all li'," said Ah Sing. "He sabby come to schooneh. Suppose he no come I go get him. Tuan Yuck no get here one hour yet."

Selim and the survivor of Henley's ambuscade took the oars, with Addams and Ah Sing in the stern, the latter squatting on the bottom board, steadying the body of his dead comrade. They rowed swiftly, the renegade in particular needing no urging, evidently assured of a scant welcome from Tuan Yuck.

The breeze was light and changeable, though it seemed to be growing stronger and steadier from the north. As they rounded the cape, they could see the *Lei Lehua* close to the reef at the northern end of the island, making slow progress under the lee of the big crater.

On board the *Wavecrest*, Addams could see Peggy busy throwing the gaskets off the sails, and Winton working at the forward capstan, heaving short the anchor-cable in readiness for instant departure.

They shot alongside and the gold was taken up the side-ladder and deposited for the time on deck with the rest.

"Touch and go!" cried Winton. "We only sighted them as they rounded the crater. Selim couldn't see them from the ridge."

Ah Sing and Selim had carried the body of Loo Chow forward and now came aft again.

"Here's an extra hand," said Addams, indicating the renegade who stood by the rail. "I've promised to take him back. Keep your eyes on him, Jim."

"Where are you going?" asked Winton. "We haven't any time to lose, Archer. And where's Foo Chin?"

"That's what Ah Sing and I are going to find out," Addams answered, as the Chinaman followed him into the boat. "Get up your mainsail; I'll be back in time."

They swiftly covered the distance to the shore and raced across the sands to the ridge, up which they scrambled, following it north in the direction taken by Henley and Foo Chin. Along the reef the *Lei Lehua* slowly crept toward the entrance to the lagoon.

CHAPTER XXV

CHECKMATE

ADDAMS and Ah Sing raced along the promontory ridge, bending low to avoid observation from the *Lei Lehua*. There was little time to spare in the search and every moment increased the risks to the maximum that Addams was willing to take on behalf of Foo Chin.

In the lagoon the *Wavecrest*, all sails set, her anchor ready to peak, was mirrored in the water, only casually flawed by the uncertain breeze. The *Lei Lehua* beyond the reef, close to the coral, yawed unevenly in the furtive spells, barely under steerageway.

They looked eagerly for signs of Henley and Foo Chin. The little beach along which the giant Chinaman had pursued the killer of his tong brother was deserted. At the crater end was a rubble of lava boulders, forming a rough stairway to the rim of the bowl, up which the chase must have progressed, unless both were lying somewhere among the rocky masses, dead at each other's hands.

They scrambled up the last rise, panting with their efforts, and looked down into the burned-out pit of Kalaulipelipe.

A bullet zipped between the two of them and a chink of *tufa* splintered at Addams' feet. A wisp of smoke showed from the rail of the *Lei Lehua* and the report of a rifle floated up to them.

"Saw us through the glasses," said Addams. "Get under cover, Ah Sing. They must realize their little plan to catch us napping failed. We haven't a minute to lose; they'll be firing at the *Wavecrest* as soon as they get in range. As long as they've seen us, Ah Sing, give Foo Chin a hail."

Ah Sing made a trumpet of his palms and shouted:

"Hi-i-i-lo-ah!!"

A flock of birds rose like spray from the farther side of the crater-bowl, as the echoes bandied the call back and forth. Beneath them the abrupt slope was hummocked with blocks of lava of all shapes and sizes. Ah Sing grasped Addams by the wrist and pointed downward, shouting once more.

Foo Chin was searching among the masses of lava as persistently as a hound that has run his fox to earth. He paid no attention to Ah Sing's signal, save by a dogged shake of his head as he continued his relentless pursuit.

"We can't wait for him much longer," said Addams, who had stayed at the rim, anxiously watching the *Lei Lehua's* slow but certain progress along the reef toward the channel entrance.

"I tell him to hully up," answered Ah Sing as casually as if Foo Chin's detention in the crater were a matter of little moment. "Eyah! He find Henley. Lookee!"

Foo Chin had stopped, alert, listening for the repetition of some sound that had caught the quick ear. They could see the whites of his eyes gleam as he turned his head from side to side. In one hand shone the long blade of his knife.

The crater-bowl was abrim with silence. The wheeling birds had settled down again. Addams fancied he could hear rather than feel the beating of his heart. Below, noiseless on his bare feet, Foo Chin padded toward two masses of fire-distorted rock, between which lay a narrow rift. As he reached the crack the sharp spit of an automatic sounded, then another, and from the other end of the crevice Henley sprang, mounting a cinder slope in uneven leaps, the ash rattling down behind him, one foot dragging, holding him with its fatal handicap.

Foo Chin bounded in pursuit as Henley toiled upward to the rim, wheeling every few steps to fire at the giant Chinaman who, disdainful of his own automatic, climbed, knife in hand, gaining at every stride.

Half way to the top of the bowl Henley turned like a cornered rat with a squeal of terror, firing his last shot point-blank at the Chinaman, who, unchecked, closed with his man.

It was over in a second. Henley twined desperately about the giant, who tore him free and literally dragged him by the collar of his coat and shirt at the full length of one powerful arm. Foo Chin's knife flashed once and came back for the second thrust, dull with crimson, ripping through the soft parts of Henley's body. The wretch dropped in a slack huddle, like a half-filled sack of sawdust, as the Chinaman released his hold, wiped his knife on the dead man's clothes and came striding up the slope toward Addams and Ah Sing, his moonlike face bland with content.

He spoke rapidly to Ah Sing without any show of excitement.

"He speak he want know about Loo Chow," translated the latter. "He ask, suppose you take along Loo Chow to Honolulu?"

"Of course," answered Addams, respecting the Oriental idea of burial. "You tell him Loo Chow's share goes to his family. We've got to hurry up if we expect to get away with any of it. Keep below the ridge, both of you."

They raced back along the slope at top speed, until they reached the place where they must descend from the ridge to the beach. Their appearance against the skyline was greeted by a scattering volley from the *Lei Lehua* that continued as they climbed down the face of the cliff and ran to the small boat; but the range was too great for any precision on the part of Tuan Yuck and any of his marksmen.

THEY reached the deck of the *Wavecrest* in safety, leaving the boat to trail. Winton had the entire armory on deck, and Selim was opening up cartridges. The broken-nosed renegade stood apart by the rail.

"Did Foo Chin get Henley, Archer?" asked Winton.

Addams nodded.

"Break out the anchor, there," he ordered. "Get in that side ladder. There should be enough wind for steerageway, with the ebb to take us out. Where's Peggy?"

"I made her go below. We thought every shot they were going to get you and I figured they might try a spare bullet or so at us, so I made her watch you through a port-hole. Here's a bit of breeze, thank Heaven!"

The *Wavecrest's* stem hissed as the impulse of the wind urged the trim yacht toward the entrance. The *Lei Lehua* outside, slowly skirting the reef, and the *Wavecrest* inside the calm lagoon, were practically equi-distant from the channel entrance, which was about half a mile from either of them.

"I think we'll make it," said Addams. "If they can keep us inside, our chances are pretty slim. Once outside, we can beat them drifting or sailing. They'll do their best to shoot us down, of course, but there are two sides to that game. We'll keep under cover all we can and try and make every shot count."

The tide drew the yacht steadily toward the channel, Addams at the wheel. The *Lei Lehua* seemed practically becalmed.

"A good blind breaker will set them nicely on the reef if they're not careful," said Addams. "I don't see why they don't start trying to pick us off."

"They have," said Winton, as a stray bullet flipped through the luff of the mainsail, high up to the gaff.

"Get below the rail, all of you!" cried Addams. "Show as little as you can. Don't fire unless there's something to shoot at."

He stood by the wheel, exposed to the bullets that began to whip by them through the masts, the slant the yacht was making for the reef in a measure protecting him. Suddenly his face grew sterner as his gaze fell on Peggy at the head of the companionway.

"Get below!" he said harshly.

"I'm not exposed here," she protested. "I can sit at the top of the ladder and reload. You're in the open."

"They can shoot right through that scuttle," he said. "Get below."

She set her lips and thrust out her rounded face determinedly.

"I won't," she declared mutinously.

A call came from Selim forward and Winton came hurrying aft.

"They're putting off a boat, Archer!" he cried. "There's a dozen of them in it. They're going to board us!"

"Down you go, Peggy!" shouted Addams. "Foo Chin, take the wheel. As soon as we're clear, let her fall off."

He sprang to the companionway as the girl retreated to the cabin and closed the hatch doors, while Foo Chin took the wheel. The *Wavecrest* was in the jaws of the entrance. Fifty yards more on the ebb would see them free of the reef and enable them to make a running fight of it on a little better than even terms, with their superior speed. Beyond the reef the breeze was steadier, and seaward whitecaps proclaimed the ultimate arrival of the wind.

The *Lei Lehua* was still more than an eighth of a mile away, but between the two schooners a boat filled with Tuan Yuck's yellow cut-throat followers was speeding to intercept the *Wavecrest*. It was Tuan Yuck's last move for checkmate, realizing the impossibility of blocking off the lagoon channel to the swifter vessel.

The water surged at the bows of the whaleboat and the oars bent to the drive of the six who tugged at them. Two in the bows, four in the stern, yelled to the rowers, firing as they came on. All were naked to the waist, with cues coiled above their yellow faces, demoniacal with greed and hatred.

Tuan Yuck was not with them. The master chessman did not travel with his pawns. He stood in the waist of the *Lei Lehua*, directing the aim of the two men beside him, while the last of his crew handled the helm.

From the *Wavecrest* they fired at the boat. The bow oarsman dropped forward limply as a bullet struck home through his shoulder and one man in the stern sank to the bottom-boards.

"We'll jibe her," said Addams, as the schooner reached the angle in the channel still carried on the ebb. "Stand by to ease the sheets. We can't take chances. Now then, Foo Chin!"

"Give me a rifle," cried the renegade as Winton with Selim and Ah Sing sprang to the sheet-tackles. "Let me get a crack at the devils!"

There was no mistaking the earnestness of his purpose. Wherever safety lay for him it was not with Tuan Yuck's following. At Addams' nod he seized a Winchester and jumped to the rail. Before his finger could pull the trigger a red star showed in the center of his forehead and he fell smashing to the deck.

THE booms swung amidship, then across to port, and the sails flapped in the half-hearted breeze as Foo Chin steered to the open sea. Now the schooner and the whaleboat filled with the shouting Chinese, were sailing on converging angles to meet at the opening of the reef-lane. Within a minute they would be in actual contact.

"They'll take us on the counter," said Addams. "Wait till they're alongside, then use your automatics. What is it, Ah Sing?"

"Foo Chin he speak some one else take wheel," said Ah Sing. "He speak betteh he fight. Too much plenty they got more peeple. Betteh he fight!"

"All right. Selim—you take the wheel. Keep it the way it is. Steady!"

The Arab took over the spokes as Foo Chin, jumping forward, seized an oaken bar that lay by the capstan and joined the rest at the starboard rail.

As the *Wavecrest* cleared the coral, slanting for the sea, the *Lei Lehua* trailing a hundred and fifty yards behind, the boat with its murderous load came alongside with a rush. Addams and Winton sprayed the onslaught with the contents of their automatics. Blood showed on the yellow skins, hands faltered as they clutched at the rail. The boat drifted astern, three dead men in it, one grasping impotently at the gunwale.

The rest, knives between their grinning lips, swarmed up the low freeboard and across the rail. Their rifles had been left in the boat. They were primitive pirates, intent upon hand-to-hand, cut-and-slash combat.

Addams crashed his empty automatic into the face of one of them, grasping at his knife-wrist and forcing him backward across the rail. Beside him he heard a yell from Foo Chin and dimly saw the giant swinging the club of his capstan-bar. Ah Sing was rolling on the deck with one assailant. Winton, hard pressed, seemed retreating. At close quarters the knife-men had at least the momentary advantage.

Addams rushed his man to the rail and

bent him backward. The spine of the Chinaman thudded against the wood before the fury of the attack. His knife fell tinkling to the deck, the grasp of both hands loosened, the savagery died from his face as the shattered vertebræ tore loose the spinal cord.

Addams heaved the paralyzed body overboard and turned to meet a new enemy who closed with him, attacking with teeth and blade.

Winton, bleeding from a slash in the shoulder, had shot his man. Two more lay senseless on the deck from the mighty blows of Foo Chin's weapon. The odds were now equal, save that Selim was at the wheel. The fire from the *Lei Lehua* had ceased in the impossibility of distinguishing the opponents.

Addams, wrestling with a Chinaman who seemed a bundle of steel wires and a voice shrieking foul-breathed expletives, heard the thud of Foo Chin's capstan-bar as it crashed on the head of a victim. Then he stumbled across the dead body of the broken-nosed renegade and fell heavily, his head striking the deck, clutching his savage assailant as they rolled, while he strove to rally his clouding senses. Despite his struggles he felt himself suffocating, his arms pinioned, the weight of the pirate holding him down defenseless, the fall of the knife imminent.

Then a sharp report sounded, the grip of his antagonist relaxed and, as his brains cleared before the urgent summons of his will, he got to one knee, then his feet, supporting himself against the mainmast.

The attack was over. Six of Tuan Yuck's men lay on the deck, three of them were in the boat, now fallen astern, close to the *Lei Lehua*, from which Tuan Yuck was still directing futile bullets, and three had already gone to feed the sharks. Ah Sing and Foo Chin were already preparing to throw the dead men overboard. Winton, his face pale, was sitting on the skylight of the main cabin, nursing his wounded shoulder. Selim was at the wheel.

Addams looked down at the dead man at his feet, lying face downward, a puddle of blood flowing slowly from where a bullet had smashed through his skull.

"Whom do I thank for that?" he asked. "I thought I was gone when I tripped."

"Mees Peggy," said Selim. "She break open hatch and come on deck. Me, I fight with that one." He indicated one of the dead men sprawling on the deck. "Foo Chin, Ah Sing, Monsieur Winton, all fight. One man with you, he try to stab you. Mees Peggy, she break open door and come out wiz peestal. She look aroun'—she see you—she shoot! *Bismillah!* She shoot straight! Then she go below."

Addams glanced astern at the *Lei Lehua*. The wind had freshened during the fight. The whitecaps had worked shoreward and were fretting the sides of the *Wavecrest*.

"Ease off the sheets," he said. "Foo Chin, you take the wheel. Selim, we'll help clear the decks. Hello, what's the matter with Tuan Yuck?"

The *Lei Lehua* was in trouble. The rising wind had found her too close to the reef for safety, and, with an inadequate crew, the clumsy, wooden schooner had missed stays as she attempted to go about. Swept broadside to the trough, she had been smashed on the coral, striking hard and wedging herself fast.

"That's checkmate for Tuan Yuck," said Addams. "He'll not get clear of that in a hurry with the wind coming up."

He hurried down the steps into the cabin to find Peggy. She was lying on the transom cushions, the pistol with which she had saved her lover on the cabin floor. Her bravery had vanished with the accomplishment of its purpose. She had fainted.

THAT night the *Wavecrest* breasted the waves beneath the stars, her sails sheeted home, close-hauled for Honolulu. The decks had been cleared of all the stains of combat, the gold had been stowed in the lazarette, after one box had been broken open and the coarse, yellow dust and nuggets, panned from the rivers of California so many years ago, displayed and handled and admired.

While Winton ran the grains through his fingers, after dinner, rejoicing at the successful ending of his quest, proud of his wounded arm, which he fondly imagined would be considered by Miss Belmont as no mean trophy of adventure, Peggy and Archer slipped on deck.

Foo Chin was at the wheel, Selim and Ah Sing forward. The sky was a blaze of stars save where the big sails seemed trying to sweep them clear.

The two talked of future plans and reverted to Fellowes and the story of the burned gold. Addams tried to lead the talk to thoughts that were closer to his heart, but the girl, now that the quest was over, seemed strangely shy. Up the companionway came the scent of a cigar, followed by Winton's tenor, between the puffs:

> "Fifteen men on a dead man's chest,
> Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!"

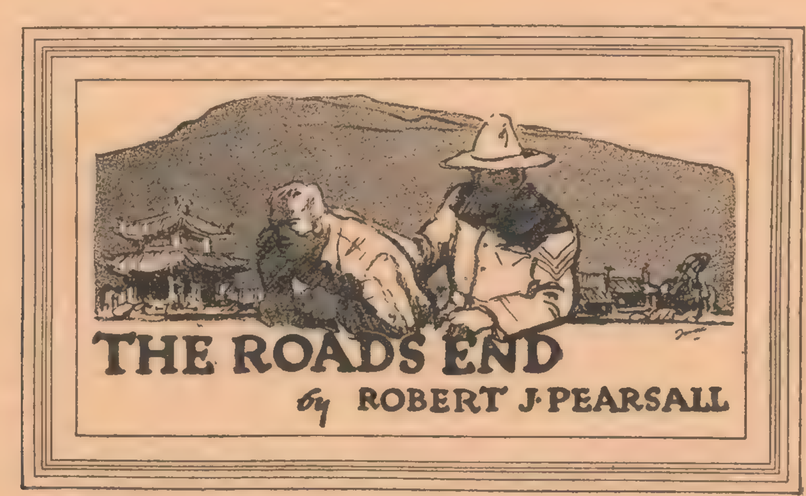
"Jim gloating over the treasure trove," laughed Addams.

"Just what is treasure trove, Archer?" she asked.

He saw his opportunity, and the girl knew by the look in his eyes he was no longer to be denied.

"Treasure trove?" he answered. "Gold to some people—Tuan Yuck, for instance, back there on the reef. To Jim, I fancy it means Miss Belmont, and for me—you!"

Peggy surrendered herself to his arms.



THE ROADS END

by ROBERT J. PEARSALL

Author of "The Reformation of Carabao," "Gallagher of Heavenly Peace," etc.

ONCE upon a time They That Rule in Pekin, stricken with a sudden mad zeal for harmony, decreed that no more games of strength or skill be fought out between their several commands. Busy as the town patrols were during the months that followed, the hospital apprentices were even busier.

Drop a thousand odd armed men, sworn to fealty to half a dozen different flags, down inside a single great walled enclosure, separate them according to nationality by other walls, stimulate their inborn pride of race with martial music, vari-colored uniforms and not always veracious traditions, and you will shortly be thanking the god of sports for his provided safety valves.

Baseball, football, track meets and the like are good; competitive drills and the Tartar Wall hike, being more closely akin to the soldier's profession, are better; but the contest that stirs the foreign section of Pekin to such a tense pitch of enthusiasm that even the stolid coolie mind is affected thereby, is the annual rifle match.

Sergeant Doran, to his very great delight, reached China with his detachment shortly before the opening of the target season. He was an old-timer, and things military meant more to him than to most men. So old an old-timer was he that he had three times refused retirement to civil life, with the rank and pay of sergeant-major.

Still, one look into his eyes would have warned any man not to speak to him of age. His spare body was still most aggressively erect, his gray hair kept closely cropped, his gray beard shaved daily to the vanishing point, and his voice held sternly to the resonant tones of twenty years before.

One growing weakness he had, however, and that probably because he did not recognize it as a weakness. Of late he had been inclined to overmuch reminiscence. His mind was apt to cast back to sanguinary memories of his first enlistment, his first and only campaign, and to a certain heroic figure that had stalked through them, a captain called "Hold Hard" Rodney.

Reacting from the monotony of the long sea voyage, he indulged that habit his first evening in Pekin. His auditor was Sergeant Stone, a rediscovered time-tried friend, who sat on a camp-stool beside Doran's bunk, and listened patiently until Doran paused for comment.

"In eighteen-eighty, eh?" he drawled teasingly.

That was Sergeant Doran's sore point. He stiffened instantly, challengingly.

"I don't remember no dates," he snapped.

"Heard they'd run you out of Mare Island because the duty was too strenuous," pursued Stone still with provocative intent.

"It's a—" Doran checked himself, clicked his bayonet, which he had been burnishing, sharply into its scabbard, and proceeded deliberately and weightily.

"Listen. There might've been some such idea in the mind of the C. O., I ain't denying. He judged me by other men, and by the dates in my descriptive book. Tried to get me to take a dog-robbing after I'd turned down retirement, to make me a—— fluffy-ruffles of an ink-slinger! But I know what I can do. I can hike these young 'uns off their feet yet. And as for shooting—well, I lost out for expert last season, but it was my off day. Watch me this year. The colonel told me this morning he was going to make me coach. Does that sound like I'm a has-been?"

"The English swear they'll shoot us off the range," said Stone reflectively.

"Swearing and shooting are two different things," retorted Doran.

"They might. They've Tientsin to draw from, you know."

"Let 'em have the whole blame British Empire! If any Limies can beat the team I train, I'll admit I'm ready for the scrap-heap. And I can't say stronger than that."

"Bring any shots out with you?"

"Rookies, all of them. But they can be taught."

"I've been noticing one of your men," said Sergeant Stone thoughtfully. "That lad over there, Haskell. Had some trouble with him, didn't you?"

Doran followed Stone's glance across the squad-room. A very slender youth with discontented eyes and a petulantly curved mouth was half reclining on his bunk, talking glibly to three other men who lounged near him. His boyishly assertive voice just carried to the two sergeants.

"Tried to desert," said Doran tersely. "Caught him at the ferry-landing. As long as he keeps bragging about it himself, don't see why I should keep quiet. Good enough fellow, though. Just got the habit of running away from things, I guess. He ran away from home, too."

"He talks too much," said Stone. "Swears he's going to try it again, from here. He'll need some money for that."

TO ALL of us the world is very much like a mirror; we see in it nothing that is not in ourselves. Haskell saw only the sordid side of the service, the small pay, plain fare, hard work, cramping discipline. The primordial urge of the races venting itself in Pekin in competitive sports meant only that there would be much betting, and hence a chance of easy money. And Doran's struggle against retirement—but let Haskell speak for himself.

"The duty-struck old ditty-box," he often called Doran. And, "He's ported a rifle so long he thinks it's part of him. Think of a man sticking by this when they're asking him to go! For me, I wish I had his chance. And he talks of the glory of serving the flag. He'd serve it better in civies, and let a man draw his ration."

It is probable that Doran's part in preventing his desertion from Mare Island had something to do with his attitude. At any rate, this must be said for Haskell, that he made no great attempt to conceal his feelings. Here he was really putting himself in line for man-sized trouble, for Doran was in charge of the squad-room, and besides had soldiered too long not to have a healthy idea of what was due his stripes. But for some reason he postponed disciplinary measures. Instead, he often talked with the boy, in spite of his half-surly avoidance. And Doran, when he talked seriously of the service, was worth hearing.

"It's the biggest thing in the world, lad," he said once. "It ain't you, it ain't me; Lord knows we ain't big." (Haskell particularly resented that coupling of personalities.) "It's just IT. Honor and justice and liberty and the flag, that's what this uniform stands for. That's why no man that wears it is free, for he *is* the flag, and his honor is the flag's honor. A civilian can do what he likes with his own; but one soldier's disgrace is all soldiers' disgrace, and the uniform's and the flag's. I kind of like you, Haskell, and we came out together—and I may be wrong, but that's the way I see things."

Herein, if Haskell had but known it, Doran was offering him the full product of his soul-searchings through many years. But Haskell's eyes were turned the other way. Doran's words were maudlin, and his continued advances after rebuffs were but proofs of servility. And what time Haskell had to spare from his duties, which he considered over strenuous, from his oft repeated complaints at the food and the quarters and the general management of the guard, and from his mental wrestlings with the problem of escape from all these things, he spent more pleasantly in chuckling over the prospect of Doran's coming discomfiture.

For something was the matter with Doran. He would not admit it, even to himself; but never before in all his years of service had the guards seemed so hard, the drills so trying, the hikes so long. For that matter the hikes tried everybody; between twenty-five and thirty miles in heavy marching order between morning and evening meal is not a stint for a weakling. Doran did not drop out from any of them—though there were others that did—but it was plain he often came near dropping down. His feet would drag, his face grow drawn and white, and several times he was able to mount hills only by lending the strength of his arms to his weakening legs, helping his knees to straighten by the pressure of his hands. But his head was always up and his back straight, especially when he marched back into the garrison under the eyes of the colonel.

BUT the colonel had eyes, or he would never have attained his colonelcy. He was watching Doran. One day he spoke to the adjutant.

"The service is a hard taskmaster," he said. "I see something I'll have to do, now or soon; and yet I really believe that to do it will fall little short of murder."

"Doran?" hazarded the adjutant.

"So you've noticed it too. It's imperative, I guess. He must be made to retire. As for his taking charge of the range—" the colonel shrugged his shoulders—"I wouldn't mind it so much if I hadn't half promised him the detail. He was my coach in Portsmouth, you know, four years ago, and the best I had. And I didn't notice at first how much he'd failed."

"Strange how those old fellows cling to the service, isn't it?"

"As in my own case," commented the colonel grimly. "You'll never find any but a young man saying that. After you've served a lifetime with the colors—but we can't retain inefficients. I'm afraid Doran's got to go."

A few days later that happened that seemed to justify the colonel's decision. The week-end hike was a little longer, the sun a little hotter; and Sergeant Doran tottered through the sally-port at the head of his section, came to a staggering halt, dragged up his rifle, opened and closed chambers, and collapsed at the command "Company dismissed!"

He was carried to the sick-bay, where the surgeon and hospital apprentices worked over him for several hours, finally pronounced him out of danger, and sent him to his quarters. Also the surgeon sent a memo. to the commanding officer's office, excusing Doran from all hikes, and placing him on light duty.

The colonel, grateful for being relieved of an unpleasant duty, postponed the matter of retirement, and created for Doran's especial benefit a new billet, that of second rifle-coach, assistant to Sergeant Nichols, detailed that day as coach.

What that order meant to Doran, the destruction of all his hopes, the tangible evidence in black and white that he was no longer what he had been, no longer to be trusted with an important duty—the obvious forerunner, indeed, of another order which would banish him forever from the only world he knew, the life and work of the Service—no man but one in Doran's position, who has put up Doran's fight, can entirely understand.

He slumped when he read it, like a man mortally wounded; his shoulders drooped forward. Then he braced himself, for the eyes of the squad-room were on him. But when he told the news to Sergeant Stone half an hour later, his voice was still hollow.

"Maybe I'm done," he said. "They seem to think so. A worn-out cog, I guess. I ain't kicking. But I don't want to quit. Not now. Seems like there ought to be something——"

He faltered. Stone did the best possible thing; he kept silent and passed him tobacco for his pipe.

"It all seems such a waste, when I look back at it." Doran spoke in a discouraged, half-puzzled way, as if—which was actually the fact—he had never permitted such thoughts before, much less uttered them.

"My life, I mean. What've I done? Routine, that's all. I even missed the wars, after that first one. Seems like I might get to do something, before I died. Big or little, so it would live after I'm gone. A soldier can't have kith nor kin; he ought to have—deeds! I must be dotty. I never talked like this before."

Stone stirred uneasily. He felt his own contentment disturbed by Doran's mood.

"You've done your duty, ain't you?" he asked almost challengingly.

It was remarkable how the stimulus of that word cleared Doran's eyes and squared his jaw.

"Yes, but—yes, I've done my duty. . . . And I'll go on doing it. By Heavens, they'll find I'm not dead yet! There was too much sun for me yesterday, that and something I ate. Anyway, I finished the hike, didn't I? I saw the best man in the Goat Island barracks fall out one day, just like that, and he's hiking yet. And as for shooting, I'll show the colonel. And Nichols and me, we'll show them Limies. Target season starts next Wednesday."

Five minutes later he was telling another story of his boyhood hero, the Indian fighter whose sole tenet and creed and scheme of life had been embraced in the two words, "Hold Hard!" He had been telling those stories for thirty years.

TARGET season began and ended, and Doran had fallen short again. He made sharpshooter with a good margin; but failed in the expert's test, and, of course, for the American team. Again, how badly it hurt him he only knew; but for this disappointment, by the grace of his own nature, he found a palliative. He threw himself, body and mind and soul, into the development of the younger men who had been chosen to represent the guard.

"We got to beat them," he said one evening, his old face, which was much thinner than it had been, aflame with enthusiasm. "We got to. I hear the English have imported a man on us from Hong Kong. Much good it'll do them. We've four men that——"

"Listen to him," commented Haskell. "You'd think he was going to shoot."

"He came nearer to it than you did, by the range of a Springfield," said a listener. "And let me tell you this, if our team wins we'll owe it more to Doran than to any one else, not excepting Nichols, who's coach and team member too. Have you heard of Smedley or Jones taking a drink since he gave them that lecture? And who talked the old man into letting the team have all night in until the match? Why, he's a father to that bunch. And I'm betting two months pay that his methods win."

"You might lose," Haskell replied. A curiously avid twist came to his lisp.

The four men composing the team still made their daily trip to the range. The Germans would not be ready for two weeks, and the Americans must keep in training. Doran, as assistant coach, accompanied them. Indeed he had sunk himself into the fortunes of the team until he seemed part of it. And he was no useless appendage. He had been in more matches than all the others combined, and many were the tantalizing mysteries of the range, of constantly changing trajectories, of shifting lights and shades, of cross currents and eddies of air, that he helped them unravel.

And Doran was not singular in his devotion. There were not many of white blood in Pekin, whether military or civilian, that would not have risked their lives to have fairly favored the fortunes of the particular team that represented their flag.

There is this about patriotism, as about any true passion, that it increases directly with the distance that separates it from its object; and to the foreigners in that cosmopolitan capital, at that particular moment, racial supremacy resolved itself into a matter of bulls' eyes — or fours or threes — in black and white paper targets at the various ranges of the marksman's course.

Doran knew all this—the air of the foreign section was vibrant with it—which makes one go beneath the surface a little deeper to understand his reticence concerning the discovery he made in the corral.

He was coming out of the post laundry shortly after retreat, which was also shortly after supper, and an unusual hour for a soldier to be out of the compound. He closed the door gently behind him, for a Chinaman was asleep inside, started forward, checked himself, and froze in his tracks. A white man's voice, a very nervous undertone, was coming from the direction of the coolies' quarters.

"Even money, then, on the field. If you can't do any better. It's a sure thing, anyway. But you ought to get odds."

"No can do." Doran recognized that voice; it belonged to Chang, head coolie of the quartermaster gang. "We got best team. Me bet two thousand *tael*, they bet two thousand *tael*, all lite. They no bet more. You sure sure thing. Me lose two thousand, *tael*, *buhau*!"

"Haven't I told you? How can they win? And remember, we split even. It's my idea. One thousand you, one thousand me. Understand?"

There was a muttered word in Chinese, evidently an affirmative.

"That's all, then. I'm going."

There was the shuffle of receding footsteps and the sound of leather-shod ones approaching. The white man passed within six feet of Doran. It was Haskell!

"WHAT'S the matter, Doran?" asked Nichols the next morning on the way to the rifle-range. "You're looking pretty dopey."

"Nothing the matter with me," retorted Doran with a flash of his old spirit. "Lost a little sleep last night, that's all. Say, I was going to ask you something. Has anybody ever tried to make a clean-up here, betting on the match. I mean, crooked. One of the team pulling his shots, or something like that."

"It was never known," said Nichols grimly. "And it had better not be, for the sake of the parties concerned. Why?"

"Well, I just got to figuring last night how the thing might be done. Oh, not by anybody on the team. I know better than that. But there's the rifles and the ammunition. One scratch of a file inside the muzzle of a rifle the night before the match—you know what that would mean. Or, a dozen bullets loosened in their cartridges, a dozen zero scores. I just got to thinking about it."

"Any reason to suspect any one?" asked Nichols.

"No," lied Doran instantly. "But——"

"I'm glad you spoke to me about it," said Nichols. "But the rifles will be tested the day before the match; and I've already instructed the team to sling them under their bunks that night. So there's no danger there. And as for the ammunition——"

"Listen!" said Doran hurriedly. "It's the ammunition I'm most worried about. It's in the magazine now, with a thousand other boxes. The day of the match the quartermaster's coolies will select a box of it, and move it with the rest of the stuff to the range. Supposing one of the sentries that'll be on from now to then should jimmy a box, and then mark it in some way, so Chang could pick it out."

"Then Chang would have to be in it, too."

"He might. He's fat on *cumshaw* already; he could make the stakes big enough for two."

"I hadn't thought of that," admitted Nichols. "Pretty far-fetched, isn't it? But I'll admit it's possible. I suppose the answer is to pick out the ammunition now, and put it where it'll be safe."

"Yes. Say the C. O.'s office."

"I'll see the range-officer about it this afternoon," Nichols promised.

"I can't think of anything else, can you?" pondered Doran.

"Not outside of kidnaping, and we're all pretty husky infants," laughed Nichols. "Don't you worry. We're going to shoot and we're going to win, and the man that bets against us will lose his money."

NICHOLS didn't take much stock in the warning; he heeded it only to please Doran, the broken old soldier, and Doran knew this. He could even feel a trace of pity in Nichols' attitude. Two months before, this would have maddened him; but by now he had gone far toward self-forgetfulness. Nothing seemed to matter much but the success of the American team. Even the tormenting thought of resistlessly encroaching old age seemed like a dream to him now. His only terror was the knowledge that when the reality of this work had passed, the dream would come again.

Meanwhile he was earning his freedom. There is no interest so stimulating as an unselfish one. He fired the other four men with his own spirit, so that before they would have done a thing to jeopardize success, they would have died. They hiked daily, slept regularly, smoked moderately, drank not at all. They dreamed mirages and wind velocities and atmospheric pressures; and all their conversation was in the nomenclature of the rifle-range. If they did not win, it would not be for lack of edge or training.

There was one element in the situation that puzzled every one but Doran. The Chinese coolies, who had always before bet to the full extent of their finances on the American team, were this year not betting. Or they were betting secretly, which is to say against the American team. Doran thought he understood. Chang had passed a tip among his underlings. Doran chuckled a little over the surprise he had prepared for them.

As for the boy Haskell, Doran talked with him, night after night. To bring out Haskell's better self seemed to become an object to him second in importance only to the winning of the rifle match. And the old veteran wasn't unskilful in his handling of men. He didn't preach, he didn't advise, he merely talked; and often he got a glimpse of the part of Haskell that he wanted to bring uppermost, staring half-frightened from his surly eyes. But Doran always left him with a sense of failure. It would take a stronger stimulus than words to do any permanent good with Haskell.

The night before the match, however, Doran avoided Haskell. He did not feel quite sure of his self control. He had seen Haskell go again to the corral, had followed him, and had watched him enter Chang's quarters. When Haskell had returned, there had been a certain nervous eagerness in his manner which Doran had no difficulty in interpreting. The plot was fixed; the money was up; Haskell was going through with the crime that, in Doran's eyes, was several degrees blacker than murder.

REVEILLE was hardly needed next morning. Most of the men were astir before it—and yet, to an outsider, there would have seemed little excitement. Noise is inimical to good marksmanship, strained nerves fatal; the rooting which spurs a baseball club on to victory would bring a wabble to the steadiest rifle team that ever lay on a range. The men understood that; and they fell into ranks to the sound of a low, business-like bustle.

The Americans were the hosts this year, and the quartermaster's wagon was already loaded with great boxes of thick sandwiches, many-layered cakes and dozens of cases of soda water, and manned by white-garmented Chinese messmen. It came as a surprise to all but a few when it stopped in front of the commanding officer's office to receive the precious box of ammunition.

Doran watched Haskell to see the blow fall. He had to admit that if it were a blow, Haskell took it without a quiver. And yet Haskell was plainly under a nervous strain; he should have betrayed himself. Doran began to feel a certain cold foreboding. What if he had overlooked a chance, if he had, in sparing Haskell, himself doomed the American team to defeat!

They passed down the alley between the Tartar Wall and the compound, toward Hattamen, the open country, and the rifle-range. The colonel led, mounted, followed by the rifle team with the range officer and Sergeant Doran, the rest of the company trailing behind. The command, "*Route step!*" was given, and the detachment broke into a low hum of conversation.

"Some day for shooting, eh?" said Nichols to Doran. "Warm but not hot, light but not bright. We're liable to come close to some records today, old boy."

The remark brought a twinge to Doran; memories of days when he himself had *broken* records. Now he was a hack, a hanger-on! But that mood only lasted a moment.

"Here come the English," went the murmur, that would ordinarily have been a shout, down the line.

THERE was half a regiment of them. They swung, in perfect time, and with their inimitable and unstudied swagger, out of Hattamen into the country road behind the smaller detachment of Americans. There was no greeting. The two bodies were not enemies, but this was not their day to fraternize.

"The Germans are ahead of us," observed Nichols. "Here's the prints of their boots. And the French, too. Well, it won't be long now."

Doran knew the feeling that was coming over Nichols, the slight distrust of his own steadiness, the slight nervous eagerness to get on the range and prove that distrust to be unfounded. He began to talk in a low tone about other and trivial things, to distract Nichols' attention. The other three men were already deep in a discussion about cherry-blossom season in Japan, a discussion that lasted until they reached the range.

It took a little while for the officers to get together and make the final arrangements. Interpreters were needed, for the German captain, who spoke a spluttering English, was the only linguist among the range officers.

In the interval, the Pekin dust having got into the throats of the hikers, they washed it down with soda water which the Chinese messmen passed out to them, while the foreign civilians that were present occupied themselves in placing bets on their respective teams. If there was a *tungtse* among all the enlisted men that wasn't already up, its owner was too ashamed of the fact to make it known by betting now.

Everything ready, the men took their places at two hundred yards.

There were four targets, and four men to each target, one of each nationality. The English were on the left of each group; they fired first, starting like champions. Three fives and a four, the last hanging like a wart on the bull's eye. The French got two fives and two fours, the Germans tied the English score, and the Americans, who fired last, did them one better, four white disks swinging across the targets at almost the same moment.

"Good, good!" whispered Doran, fidgeting a few yards back of Nichols, who was on number four target. All up and down the lines were other whisperings as the men jotted the scores down in notebooks, and pulled fervently for their teams.

BY THE time they had fired their first string, the Americans had increased their lead to three points. Then the impossible happened—the steadiest shot on the team went wild.

For five shots, Sergeant Nichols had stayed on the bull's eye; but his sixth was a wide four. His seventh was a three, and those who saw his face when it was marked up, knew he was grateful it was not a miss. He hesitated a moment, under the eyes of the whole range, and then turned and walked deliberately back from the firing point.

Doran was the first to reach him.

"What's the matter?" he gasped.

"I—I don't know. I'm sick," explained Nichols, but looking bewildered himself at the explanation.

"Drunk?" hazarded an Englishman, coming up.

"Shut up," snarled Doran. "Good God, Nichols, can't you shoot?"

"My eyes have gone back on me," went on Nichols. "I can hardly see the target. And there's something wrong with my head."

"Cease firing!" yelled the chief scorer.

Through the rapidly increasing group came pushing the American colonel, his face anxious and alarmed.

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

The range officer was already by Nichols' side.

"The sergeant's out of it," he explained. "And, Colonel, *I haven't a man to take his place!*"

"Nichols!" The colonel turned to him sharply.

"I can't help it, sir," Nichols said slowly. "Look at me; I'm all wabbly." He held up his hand, and they saw he was shaking like a man in an ague.

"And not another man has fired a shot in two weeks," said the range officer. "Except——"

TO Doran's old face, while he had been standing there unnoticed, had mounted an undefinable expression. He shifted sharply in his tracks, and in an instant, such was the jumble of emotions he expressed, he became the center of attention.

"I have," he said tensely.

In unconscious imitation of Sergeant Nichols, he raised his own hand, and those who stood near enough saw it had suddenly become as steady as a rock.

Now, to thrust one's self forward in that way is usually regarded in the service as an attempt at self-aggrandizement, and a shameful thing. It speaks well for the men's understanding of Doran that there was not, either then or afterward, a single voice raised impugning his motives. The only question was whether he was the best man. Some began murmuring objections. There were plenty of experts on the field. Was a two week's lapse in training such a serious thing?

The colonel, however, was remembering better scores than had ever been made on that range. Also he was gazing into Doran's eyes. What he saw in them may in some measure be guessed at. Remorse, perhaps, certainly a fierce entreaty, a passionate resolve, a rejuvenating upheaval of spirit that clothed the old face with Power.

"I'm to blame," half whispered Doran. Then, in a voice that was terrible in its pent up force. "And I can make up for it. I must! Colonel——"

The colonel nodded.

No man who saw Doran shoot that day will ever forget it. It was not that his accuracy was so marvelous, though he was high man on the range; but that it was so marvelous for him. From a palpably aging man, waging a hopeless fight against decrepitude, muscles slackening, eyes dimming, voice held to the round tones of manhood only by a sheer effort of the will, he had become in an instant revitalized, transfigured with youth. It was almost a resurrection, so clearly did the Doran of twenty years before nerve his arm, fill his voice, look from his eyes.

The Americans left two hundred yards three points behind the French; but they recovered their lead at three hundred. At five hundred yards the English made a "possible" score, and, thanks to a split cartridge in the belt of one of the Americans, quit that range two points ahead. Americans, French, and Germans trailed in that order. So far, it was any one's match.

Men noticed a change in Doran as he started back from the five hundred yard firing line. He held himself as stiffly erect as before, his jaw was set as hard, his feet took hold on the ground in the same firm way; but there wasn't quite the same glint to his eyes, and his voice, when he spoke to the range officer, had a strained note in it that made that official look at him anxiously.

"How is Nichols, sir?" he asked.

"Better the last report, Doran. He's in no danger. Are you all right?"

FOR the first time in his military life Doran ignored a question put to him by an officer. He took his place at six hundred yards.

Doran scored four, good for a sighting shot at that range. The Americans gained a point on the English in the first round of shots, and repeated the gain in the second. Then Smedley got outside the three ring for one score, and at the end of the first string the English were again leading by two points.

The peculiar atmosphere of a closely contested rifle match had come over the field. Conversation, even in whispers, had almost entirely stopped; the men sat or stood motionless, each nationality by itself, staring at the bobbing targets. It was this uncanny stillness that permitted the scorer behind target number four to hear Doran begin muttering something to himself after he had fired his eighth shot. The scorer crept up a little closer and listened. Doran was repeating over and over again, "Hold Hard!"

At the ninth shot the English and Americans were tied again; at the tenth—Doran was the last man to fire. The Americans needed five to win. Doran threw himself into the sling, sprawling almost at right angles to the line of fire, legs spread wide, elbows buried in the sand, shoulder straining against the butt, eye along the barrel. Very slowly and steadily and confidently, he squeezed the trigger back until the firing-pin fell and the rifle spoke. Then he called out clearly, as he had taught numberless recruits to call their shots—

"Number four, a five!" He did not need to see the white disk come up and cover the bull, and it was as well; for before the shot was marked he had fallen limply, face downward, on the firing point.

THERE was a hush over Megwa Fu that evening, a quiet that would have been remarkable at any time, but that was extraordinary on the eve of a triumphant day. Everything was not understood — the mystery of Sergeant Nichols' sudden illness still remained a mystery—but the fullness of Doran's gift to them was made more and more evident to the men with each reluctant report from the sick-bay.

No one was allowed to visit Doran. That was the order of the surgeon; but one man defied it. Driven away, he came back stealthily, and succeeded in getting to the door of the ward before the hospital steward caught him. His almost tearful pleadings rose above the steward's threat to call the corporal of the guard.

Doran, hearing the wrangle, and being unable to raise his own voice much above a whisper, made a bottle of entirely useless medicine useful by sending it crashing from the stand at the head of his bunk to the tiled floor.

"I want to see that man," he said when the steward hurried in.

"But, sergeant——"

"I want to see him. Alone."

Haskell came in, pale-faced, frightened-eyed, trembling.

"Sergeant," he began. "Sergeant——"

"There, there, boy," said Doran, separating Haskell's aimlessly twisting hands, and taking one of them. "Don't you go fretting your head. It's all right, all right."

The volume of Doran's voice increased a little on the last words.

"But you don't know. I——"

"But I do know." Sergeant Doran's whitening lips curved into a smile. "And I know what you're figuring on doing. You're figuring on telling me, and then the rest, and making a mess of the whole business. Ain't that so?"

"Yes, but——"

"Well, you see you mustn't," said Doran, simply. "Because I know all about it; it was the soda water that was doped. I thought it would be the ammunition. That was my mistake. But I paid for it, and so——"

"*You* paid! What of me?"

"Lad, lad," said Doran, wistfully, "can't you see why I paid? Can't you see why I wouldn't tell? Can't you see that it was——"

A sudden echoing memory came to Haskell. He took the words out of Doran's mouth, and, as though there were some exercising spell in them, in that moment the shallow-minded cynic of the squad-room died, and the boy became a man.

"*For the honor of the service!*"

"I knew it—I knew you'd understand, after a bit. You didn't then; it was just a shooting match to you—and your own dishonor. An American soldier a traitor! How could we tell that—to those others? And so—at the end—the end!"

"I won the match," he cried, after a long interval, in a ringing voice. "And you! I played the game out!"

Outside four bells had gone, and the last low note of Taps was drifting away upon the winds.

SOME FREAK

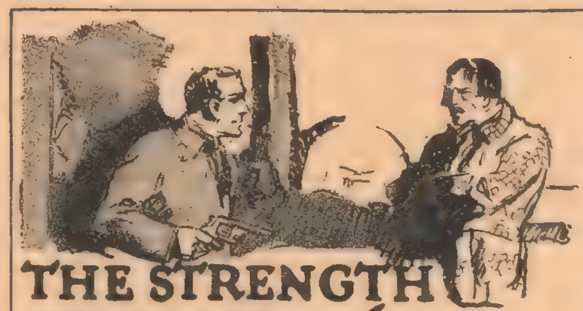
BY ED. L. CARSON

YOU ongodly automatic,
I kin tell you most emphatic
You're the darndest-lookin' gun I've ever seen.
They kin call you what they want to
But this much I'm strictly on to—
You are nothin' but a massacre machine.

When a row gits started proper
An' we have to shoot to stop 'er'
You're a little bunch of dessicated death;
An' you send your loads a-pokin'
Through the atmosphere a-smokin'
In the time it takes a man to draw his breath.

I admit your penetration
An' your cussed condensation,
An' as for a friend in need, you're shorely one;
But your looks are plumb unlawful
An' your shape is something awful,
An'—oh——! you don't look nothin' *like* a gun.

With the risin' generation,
Bent on death an' devastation,
You're a winner; but so long as I'm alive,
When some maverick gets millin',
Or some outlaw needs a killin',
Let me glom my good old-fashioned Forty-five.



THE STRENGTH OF SMALL

by JOHNSTON McCULLEY

Author of "The Thing He Needed."

AGAIN the wind shrieked, and the snow and sleet beat against the crusted windows. Pierre, the old guide, threw another log on the fire. Pearson and Holland did not stop their rollicking college song. Sylvester Small shivered and drew nearer the fire, and again centered his attention on the book he had been reading.

It was a peculiar company. Four men in a commodious cabin, in the heart of the Olympics, in the dead of Winter—and three of them did not belong to the country!

For years old Pierre had acted as guide in the Summer, saving his money until he became the owner of a cabin that approached magnificence, and in which he could care for many persons, yet always bewailing the fact that for the greater part of the year there was no business except the traps and the little money they might bring in.

But this Winter things were different. A Summer guest whom Pierre had guided for years had suggested a Winter camp and had sent him his first customers. So here they were, on a bitter night, kept indoors by a blizzard that had raged throughout a night and a day and was beginning the second night with no signs of abating.

There was Robert Pearson, son of a rich man, an athlete, strong in muscle and proud of it, egotistical at times and at other times a boon companion.

The second man also was wealthy—Henry Holland by name; and he had invaded the Olympics in the dead of Winter for the hunting to be found there. He was tall and broad-shouldered, and could do feats of strength, and he and Pearson soon became fast friends.

Then there was Sylvester Small. His name fitted him. His father had been a giant in strength and courage, but the son had acquired his physical characteristics from his mother. From his father he had taken mental qualities that were good. His shoulders were thin, he tipped the beam at one hundred fifteen, and he wore eye-glasses. His hands and wrists were like a woman's in size, but there was the strength of steel wire in them. And a man could not judge correctly his courage from his size.

Small was a chemist. He had a splendid income from his profession, but was not wealthy. He had decided on a Winter in the Olympics because of the quiet he expected to find there; for he wanted to study, and the mountains appealed to him.

The past week had been a sort of a nightmare for Sylvester Small. Being shut up the greater part of the time in a cabin is not good for men, and real characters were being brought to the surface through the veneer of civilization.

Pearson and Holland openly made fun of Small because of his size, and because he liked the open fire and a book better than a ten-mile chase after a wounded buck. They did it cleverly enough, but none of their attempts escaped the little man who turned the pages of his book and now and then smiled softly at their shafts of sarcasm. He had left them severely alone. His attitude was that of a man who feels a little pity for other men who think they are demonstrating strength when they are but showing their weaknesses.

They taunted Small because he dropped behind on those rare occasions when he went on a tramp with them. They laughed when he was unable to get a buck across his shoulders and carry it to the camp. They made sport of his short stride and his pale, student's countenance, and his eye-glasses; and they hid his books and tried to bother him when he read in the evening. And Small continued to smile softly, since they did not descend to open and intended insult, and to pity them a bit.

They had nothing to say of his marksmanship. Small did not use a rifle, but he could use a revolver. Back in civilization he was the crack shot of a pistol club that had a national reputation. He could drill a bull's-eye in a target as easily as he could point a finger. So they merely related to Pierre, in Small's hearing, that such a little man could not be expected to carry a heavy rifle about; but they said nothing about the way he handled the smaller weapon—either by way of praise or blame.

From his position before the fire, on this night of the blizzard, he glanced around as Holland spoke:

"How much longer, Pierre, is this blamed blizzard going to last? When can we go after that big buck?"

"Two, t'ree day, maybe," the guide replied. "Heem no good to go now. Heem buck keep in out of storm."

"Make the time as short as possible, old boy," Pearson put in. "We came up here to rough it, you know, not to sit before a fire and read a book."

Small turned away from them and faced the fire again, that soft smile playing over his face. Pierre attempted to divert Pearson and Holland; he didn't want Small baited again this night. Pierre was afraid Sylvester Small would pack up his things after the storm and leave the camp, and Pierre wanted the money Small's presence there meant for him.

"Thees blizzard," he said, "es no fun, although et seem lak et to some. Et es no time for a man to be out. A strong man slip an' fall on ze ice an' no get up. There heem die. Et es no fun!"

There was partial silence for a time then. Small read his book. Pierre poked at the fire. Pearson and Holland talked in low tones of victories on athletic fields, of football and baseball and polo.

The wind shook the cabin walls. The sleet beat against the windows. The storm shrieked and howled like a gigantic wolf-pack on a hunger trail.

Pearson sprang from his chair.

"Listen!" he commanded.

Complete silence then, save for the roar of the storm. Then there came a wail, a sort of cry, lashed on its traveling by the whims of the wind until they could not tell whether it was a cry of human or beast.

"Wolf!" snorted Holland. "As I was saying——"

"Wait!" Pierre exclaimed.

Again the cry, nearer now; then something beat against the door.

"A man—in this storm!" Small gasped, getting up from his chair, and shivering at the mere thought of a human being out in such a blizzard.

Pierre sprang to the door, with Pearson and Holland close behind him. The big bolt was shot back, the door swung open by the force of the storm, and a blinding flash of snow and sleet came in, sweeping half way across the big room; and with it an ice-incrusted figure that slipped and fell full length upon the floor.

Pierre threw his weight against the door, closed and bolted it, then whirled around. Pearson and Holland were lifting the wayfarer from the floor.

"It's a woman—a woman!" Sylvester Small was crying.

II

PEARSON and Holland got her into a chair and began taking off the heavy muffler she had wrapped around her head. They took off her mittens, too, and Holland examined her hands.

"Brandy, Pierre!" Pearson cried. "She's half frozen! Great Scott! A woman out in a storm like this——"

Pierre stood in the center of the room, and for an instant did not move. He was looking at the girl's face, which was uncovered now, a face beautiful in its way—and on Pierre's countenance there was a peculiar look.

"The brandy, Pierre, you idiot!" Holland cried.

"Et es zere on ze shelf——"

"Get it, you fool! What's the matter with you?"

Sylvester Small hurried to the shelf and got the flask of brandy and a glass. He handed them to Holland.

But the girl waved it away, struggled from them, and stood up, holding out her arms to the old guide.

"Pierre—" she began.

"Well?"

"My—my father——"

Pierre's eyes glittered as he turned toward her.

"An' what of your fathaire, Mary Rancour?"

"You must come—at once—come to our cabin! He—he has been hurt—badly."

"An' why come to me, Mary Rancour?"

"The storm—and you were the nearest—you were the only one——"

"You come to me because zere es no one else, zen? Ver' good!"

"Pierre, for the love of Heaven! He is unconscious—he may be dying. I got him into the cabin, into his bunk. Then I hurried here—five miles through the storm. He—he may die. You must come!"

Pierre looked at her for a moment, then turned away toward the fire.

"No, I not come!" he said. "Let heem die!"

"Oh!" The girl's cry cut to the hearts of those who heard, even into the heart of Pierre, but he gave no sign.

"What the devil does this mean?" demanded Pearson. "What is the trouble, Miss Rancour? Your father——"

"He was at the edge of the clearing, cutting wood," the girl answered swiftly, sobbing as she spoke. "He slipped on the ice and fell. He—he struck his head, I think. I saw him from the window. I started to run out to him, and then he got up. But he was bewildered, I think. He walked in the wrong direction—toward a precipice; and before I could reach him he fell. I got him back to the cabin——"

"You? You got him back?"

"Yes—I had to. He was unconscious. I took my hand-sled and went down into the cañon—almost a mile. I couldn't bring him back to consciousness though. And so I came—here!"

She looked at Pierre again, but he kept his back turned toward her.

"Great Heaven! Pierre, we must do something," Holland said. "If this young woman could make it through the storm, surely we men can. Let's get started."

"No!" said the guide. "You may go, m'sieu, an' your friends. I stay here!"

"Afraid of the storm, you coward?" demanded Pearson.

Pierre's laugh was horrible as he whirled around and faced them.

"Afraid—me?" he exclaimed. "I will start now, an' walk to ze town—twenty mile—if you t'ink me afraid. But I do not go to ze cabin of Jacques Rancour!"

"But why, man, why?" gasped Pearson. "If he's in danger—liable to die?"

"Let heem die!"

The girl darted toward him across the room.

"I am a proud girl, Pierre," she said, "but I am begging and pleading now—of *you!* My father would curse me, perhaps, if he knew I came here. He would rather die than take assistance from you. But I came because I love my father, and because I need him. What is to become of me, Pierre, if he dies? You—you loved my mother——"

Evidently it was an unfortunate remark, for he whirled upon her again with anger surging into his face.

"Yes, I loved your mothaire," he said, trying to speak in softer tones. Then his voice changed, and the anger came out. "An' so did Jacques Rancour! We were frien's when we were boys, zat fathaire of yours an' mesel'. We both love her. We are rivals, eh? An' did he fight fair?"

"He fought you for her—and you lost. She loved my father more than she did you. And it was twenty years ago."

"Et es not zat your mothaire love heem better zan me—zat she married heem instead of me," the guide said. "You say we fought, eh? But he did not fight fair, ma'm'zelle, zat you know. He beat me after I am down. He leave me to die. An' I surely do die haf not a hunter find me an' take me to ze cabin. Today I limp as I walk—your fathaire! Today I haf scar across one cheek—your fathaire!"

The girl stepped nearer and touched his shoulder with her hand.

"You loved my mother," she said softly, "and I am now very like she was then, folks say."

"Et es so!" he replied.

"Then do it for my sake, Pierre—for *my* sake. What is to become of me if my father dies?"

"I will take care of you——"

She stepped away from him.

"You want him to die!" she cried. "Maybe you can save him now, but you'll not try. You'd murder him by not helping him, then give his daughter a home——"

She ran swiftly to the chair, snatched up the long muffler, and began winding it about her head. The tears were flowing down her cheeks.

"Then I'll go back through the storm!" she cried. "I'll go back and watch—until the end. For I can do nothing but watch—I am not strong enough, and I do not know how. I can not even tell where and how he is hurt." She stopped for a moment to sob. "And all the mountains shall know the story," she added, looking at him defiantly, "and know how to judge you. Perhaps it is best. Perhaps my father would curse me for coming to you and asking help."

She turned toward the door.

"Hold on, there!" cried Pearson. "Nothing like this, whatever! You came for help, and you're going to get it, young woman. I'll go back with you—perhaps I can do something."

"Thank you—oh, thank you! But the storm——"

"I guess I can make it, if you can."

"I'll go, too," said Holland. "Where are my coat and gloves? What'll we need, Miss Rancour?"

"I—I don't know," she said.

Sylvester Small walked toward them.

"I'll go, too," he said. "I know something of medicine——"

"You couldn't make it fifty feet from the door, Small," Pearson said. "You'd be picked up and blown away by the wind. We'll have all we can do to get there ourselves, without helping a chap like you."

"But perhaps I could give some aid," he persisted, reaching for his coat. "I'll take the medicine-case I brought with me——"

"You couldn't make it, Small," said Holland.

Small's eyes flamed; that soft smile did not come into his face now.

"And what can you and Pearson do when you get there?" he asked. "What can you do to help an unconscious man that probably has a lot of broken bones? With your permission, Miss Rancour——"

But the girl already had unbolted the door and thrown it open. Again the wind, and the swirl of snow and sleet came in, and Small, unconsciously, half turned away from it.

"You see?" said Pearson, laughing. "You couldn't make it in a million years!"

He followed the girl out, Holland at his heels, and Pierre closed the door.

III

SYLVESTER SMALL turned back toward the fire, holding the heavy coat in his hands. Pierre had walked to the table and taken a drink of brandy. He sat down before the fire, bowed his head in his hands.

"If I knew the way—" whispered Small, half to himself.

"Let 'em go," said Pierre. "Zis Jacques Rancour—he es my enemy zis twenty year. Efery time we meet, we fight, until four year ago, when ze sheriff come out an' tell us we go to jail ef we fight more. So now we nefer look when we meet in ze town or in ze woods. An' why should I go help heem, eh?"

"That isn't the idea!" snapped Small. "He's a plain, ordinary human being that's been smashed up. I know doctors who'd nurse back to health a man they'd like to shoot like a cur. I know one who operated on a man and saved him, then fought a duel and killed the man he had saved. It's the idea of letting a human being die without trying to help save him."

"Maybe so, m'sieu; I do not t'ink so."

Small paced back and forth across the room.

"I'm a mighty little man," he burst out, stopping in the center. "I couldn't make much of a hit at polo or football, but maybe I'm of some use in the world. I took part of a course in medicine when I was studying chemistry—came near being a sawbones—and I could help that man, perhaps, if he isn't past help. Pearson and Holland are strong enough to get through the storm, I suppose, but what the deuce will they do when they get there? They can only keep the girl company until her father dies—keep her from being alone with her sorrow. And you and I could do things, Pierre."

"Maybe so."

"You know a bit about broken bones?"

"I haf seen many," the guide answered. "Up here in ze mountains we haf no doctaire and et es necessary zat all of us know some-t'ings about broken bones."

"That's what I was thinking. Now, Pierre, suppose we go over to the Rancour cabin. You know the way, and I do not. We'll help out this chap that's gone and got himself smashed, and after that you can go right ahead as you were before—ignoring him. If it is revenge you're after, you couldn't have a better one—making him realize that he owes his life to you."

Pierre pondered for a moment, his head still upon his hands, and Sylvester Small waited hopefully. Finally the guide stood up and walked to the table for more brandy.

"No!" he answered.

Small followed him to the table and took a neat drink of the brandy himself. That was something unusual for Small. Then he picked up his heavy coat and put it on.

"You freeze," said Pierre, glancing at him. "You not know ze way."

"I was over there once," said Small.

"In ze daytime, by following ze shore of ze lake—yes. But not in ze dark night an' a blizzard. You get lost and freeze. I not let you go."

"Be a man, then, and go with me—show me the way. Take me there and then come back, if you're not man enough to stay. You're a guide, aren't you? Then guide me to Rancour's cabin—I'll pay you extra!"

"Anyt'ing but zat. To ze town ef you are fool enough to try et, but not to ze Rancour cabin."

Small wrapped a heavy muffler around his head and face, and went across the room for his gloves and medicine-case.

"An' I not let you go alone," added Pierre, walking toward the door. "I am responsible—me. Et would be suicide. Be sensible, Mistaire Small!"

Without answering, Small opened his medicine-case and inspected its contents. The storm carried to their ears a cry—the second to come that night from the depths of the blizzard. Small looked up; Pierre whirled toward the door. Some one beat upon it and the guide threw it open.

Pearson and Holland staggered in through the swirling sleet and snow. Between them they carried Mary Rancour.

"She fell—hurt her ankle—can't walk," Pearson gasped. "We hadn't gone two hundred yards."

The girl was groaning. They took off her cloak and muffler and mittens and put her in one of the bunks.

"My father! My father!" she was sobbing.

"Great Scott! What can we do?" Pearson asked. "I never saw such a storm. A human being can't live through it. I don't know how the girl ever got over here in the first place!"

Sylvester Small suddenly assumed the center of the stage.

"We'll care for her first," he said. "Get some hot water, Pierre. Holland, get that roll of bandage cloth!"

Pearson was throwing off his coat. Holland hurried across the room to get the cloth and Pierre went for the hot water. They accepted Small's generalship for the time being without question, perhaps because there was now a new quality in his voice and determination in the lines of his face. He talked and acted like a man who knows what he is doing.

Without removing his heavy coat or muffler, Small took off the girl's heavy shoe and cut away her thick stocking. He examined the ankle, bathed it, bandaged it, dropped a pill in a glass of water to dissolve it, and made her drink the mixture.

"She'll be asleep in a moment," he whispered to the three men. "That ankle isn't bad, but she's exhausted."

"It's tough on her father," said Pearson. "But we can't get to him now, without the girl to guide us."

Small went back to the table and closed his medicine-case and drew on his gloves. They gave him scant attention, for they were watching the girl. Her moaning had ceased, and she was falling asleep. They turned only when Small spoke.

"If you did get there, you couldn't do anything," he said. "Pearson, you and Holland are strong men, but strong men can not mend broken bones unless they know how. I know how. Pierre, get on your things!"

"You can not go," said the guide, an' I will not!"

Small's eyes glittered as he looked at the three of them standing foolishly in a row before him. Suddenly his hand went into a pocket, and when it came out he held his revolver in it.

"Get into your things!" he commanded. "I'll give you just one minute—and if you aren't ready then, I'll shoot. There isn't a jury in the world wouldn't acquit me. Pearson, you and Holland go over by the fire and sit down. Read a book or something!"

"See here, old man—" Pearson began.

That "old man" was a mistake.

"As I say!" cried Small, and swung the revolver upon him.

"You'll be sorry for this foolishness, let me tell you that!"

"No talk just now! Ah——"

The revolver spoke; a flash of flame shot through the room; a puff of smoke went ceilingward. Pierre had tried a rush, and the bullet had sped by his head to bury itself in the wall behind.

"I mean business!" said Small. "You'll get it in the breast the next time, Pierre. Into your things!"

Pierre crossed the room and picked up his coat. Sylvester Small backed to the door and stood against it, watching the men in front of him.

"You're going to guide me to the Rancour cabin, Pierre," he said. "You're going to walk in front of me all the way, and if you leave the trail, or don't make good time, you're going to be shot. Pearson, you'll remain here with Holland. When Miss Rancour awakes, give her one of those powders I left on the table. Hurry, Pierre! We'll see if a man can be left alone to die like a dog when there is help five miles away!"

Sylvester Small had them cowed. They had seen him shoot, and they didn't like the flash that was in his eyes now, nor the ring in his voice. Pearson and Holland, sitting before the fire, watched him in wonder. Pierre struggled into his coat and wrapped a muffler about his head. Then he walked toward the door.

"No tricks, remember," Small warned. "Holland, come over here and close the door as we go out."

Pierre threw it open. A gust of sleet struck Small in the face. This time he did not flinch at the storm. The door was slammed shut behind them. By the tiny bit of light that came through the snow-encrusted window, Small could see Pierre draw the muffler closer around his face.

"Straight ahead to the Rancour cabin, and no tricks," said Small. "I'm right behind you, remember, ready to shoot!"

Pierre cursed by way of answer. Then he started off through the darkness, Sylvester Small half a dozen feet behind him, unable to see him well, but guiding himself by the sound of the other's boots breaking through the crusted snow.

IV

PIERRE was no coward, but his slow wit did not allow him to comprehend the change in Sylvester Small, and he decided to take no chances by disobeying the man behind who held a revolver and knew how to use it.

So the guide led the way faithfully across the clearing and to the trail that ran through the forest. It was so dark he could see no more than two feet before him, and the blizzard was driving the fine sleet into his face, but he knew every inch of the trail and had no trouble keeping to it.

Small, his eyes closed tightly at times, trying hard not to let the wind "catch his breath," stumbled along behind, reaching out now and then to touch the man before him, guiding himself half by instinct.

They reached the shore of the lake and walked out upon the thick ice, across which the snow swirled before the wind. It was colder here than in the woods, but walking was better and faster time could be made; and so Pierre decided on it. Now that he was on the trail his pride in his ability to guide came to him, and he led the way carefully.

After the first two miles, Small walked in a sort of stupor, making his way onward mechanically. His hands were numb—he began to doubt whether he'd be able to shoot if Pierre turned upon him. His face felt frozen despite the thick muffler. His back ached and his legs. But he set his teeth tightly and staggered on, not trying to speak, shielding himself from the blizzard behind the guide's giant form.

"Walk—fas'—!" Pierre warned repeatedly.

They turned to the land to cut across a tiny promontory, but soon were out on the lake again. Pierre took Small by the arm now, and urged him onward. They struck a smooth piece of ice, where little snow had drifted, and ran, bending forward against the strength of the wind.

Small's head began to pain, and he found himself wondering if they'd ever reach their destination. Once or twice Pierre shook him. Once he lost consciousness for a moment, and regained it to find that Pierre was holding a flask to his lips, pouring brandy down his throat.

They staggered on, and after a time left the lake and struck into the forest again. They stumbled over rocks and logs half buried in the snow, sometimes to fall. And finally they reached a tiny clearing, across which they could see a point of light.

Pierre gave a cry of thankfulness.

Small aroused himself, felt in his pocket, where he had put his revolver while they were out on the lake, and found that the weapon was safe. He bit at his lips, shook his head, beat his hands against his body. Pierre led him to the door of the cabin and threw it open, and they staggered in.

Small saw a man in a bunk—a man who moaned and tossed as if in delirium. He saw a lamp burning on the table, saw a fire that needed more wood; then the room seemed to spin around him, and he started to fall. Pierre caught him.

He regained consciousness to find that Pierre had stripped off his coat, gloves and muffler, his boots, and even his socks. He was before the fire, on the floor, and the logs Pierre had hurled on the coals were blazing merrily. The guide had mixed brandy with hot water, and was giving it to him.

"Be ze man!" Pierre was whispering "You do ver' well on trip here. You make me come to ze house of my enemy. Now brace up; do your work!"

He helped Small to his feet.

"Keep the fire hot," the little man gasped.

He staggered to the fire and stood before it for a moment, then, working rapidly, he stripped off the remainder of his wet clothes, spreading them on the floor before the fire, and telling Pierre to do the same. He opened the medicine-case, looked at the contents, took out a roll of bandage cloth and a vial or two. Then he went to the bunk where Jacques Rancour was tossing and moaning.

"Help me get his clothes off, Pierre," he ordered.

"I do not'ing, m'sieu. I haf guide you here because you make me. Zis es no place for me. I stay here until you are done, an' I guide you back. But I do not'ing else to help."

"Very well, you brute!"

Small stopped for a moment to brush his hand over his eyes. Then he took a deep breath and began his work.

V

AFTERWARD, Sylvester Small could not tell how he did it. But he managed to get the clothes off Jacques Rancour and make an examination. The man's body was a mass of bruises. One leg was broken and one arm, and there was a fractured rib. Also, there had been a bad blow on the head.

Pierre sat before the fire drying himself and turning Small's clothes over now and then and spreading them out anew. Small went into the tiny rear room of the cabin and found a cracker box. He made splints of it. Then he gave Rancour an injection of morphine.

At times Small could scarcely keep from falling. He felt weak, felt that he wanted to throw himself in a bunk and go to sleep. But always he nerved himself to go on with his work.

He was very slow, however, and Pierre would not help. Small set the leg and arm and bound the splints on them. He took several stitches in a cut on Rancour's cheek. He bathed the bruises and dressed them as well as he could, and tried to make his patient comfortable in the bunk.

There was no more he could do, then. So he went back to the fire and faced Pierre.

"Can't you cook something?" he asked.

"Not in thees cabin, m'sieu."

"I want it—something hot. I'm—I'm almost all in."

"I can touch not'ing here, m'sieu."

"I'm out of patience with you, Pierre. I don't like the way you've acted this night. I'll not stand much more of it. We came here through the storm, risked our lives, to help this man. I've done all I can, and now it is my privilege to attend to myself—and to you. I've got to have something hot to eat—some soup, broth, even beans and bacon will do. And you've got to have something!"

"I do not eat zis man's food!"

"He'll not care, after what we've done for him."

"Et es not zat. I would not eat a mouthful, m'sieu, if he offer et on hees bended knee."

"You'll be a mighty sick man if you don't, Pierre."

"I haf drink brandy while you work on heem. I am all right."

Small stepped nearer.

"But I'm not," he said, "and you're going to cook me something."

He had reached his coat before Pierre divined his intention, and had taken out the revolver. The guide had had ample chance to get possession of it, but had not attempted to do so. He had supposed all need for the revolver gone for Small, since he was at Rancour's cabin.

Small took the weapon and sat down at one side of the fire.

"Cook!" he commanded.

"Not in thees house——"

"Cook, curse you! Do you think I'm going to lie down and die because you won't touch this man's supplies? Cook food—and a lot of it!"

Small's eyes were glittering again. Pierre got upon his feet and started toward a cupboard in one corner of the room. Half way there he stopped and looked back, but Small's eyes were upon him and Small held the revolver ready.

So Pierre cooked. He made soup, and cooked beans and a heap of crisp bacon. He placed the food on the table, together with a pot of strong coffee, then turned back to the fire.

Small drew a chair up to the table and began to eat.

"Better drink some coffee, Pierre," he said. "If you come down with pneumonia or something like it, you can't take Pearson and Holland after that buck, you know. Of course it doesn't make much difference to me—I'm too little and weak to hunt a stag. I ain't worth a cuss! But Pearson and Holland might not like it if they miss their sport."

"I can not eat in zis house, Mistaire Small."

"You'll drink coffee, however. Come on, Pierre, or I'll have to get ugly again. I'll pay Rancour for it afterward, if you insist. I'm not asking you to be Rancour's guest—I'm asking you to be mine. Come over here and get busy!"

The stubborn guide glanced up to find that Small had the revolver pointed at him again. And in Small's eyes was that ominous glitter that Pierre was beginning to fear.

He crossed to the table and sat down and gulped at a cup of coffee.

"Some soup, too," warned Small.

Pierre ate some, while Small scooped the hot food into his mouth with one hand and held the revolver ready in the other.

"This is the first time on record," he said, "where a man had to force another to eat and drink to save his life. I said *man*—I'm not talking of suffragettes. Take some more coffee!"

A groan from Rancour. Small left the table and hurried across to the bunk. Rancour had regained consciousness, but his face was twisted with pain.

"Who are you?" he gasped.

"My name's Small, Rancour. I'm at a cabin down the lake for the Winter. You were hurt—fell over a precipice. Your daughter came for me, and I've fixed you up."

"Where is Mary?"

"She's all right. Wouldn't let her come back in the storm. She'll be here after daylight, I expect. The storm is dying down now. You've got a broken leg and arm, and a cracked rib and head. Just take it easy and don't move more than is necessary and you'll come out all right. Wait—I'll get you some brandy."

"Cabin—down the lake," muttered Rancour. "At—Pierre's?"

"Yes. There are three of us there for a time. I happened to be something of a doctor."

"My girl—my Mary—went *there*—for help?"

"Keep quiet now!"

"She shouldn't!" Rancour groaned. "I'll be—the joke of the mountains. She went to my—enemy for help."

"That's all right, Rancour. You keep quiet until I get the brandy."

Small hurried to the table and got the flask and a glass. A cry from the bunk made him turn. Rancour had raised himself on one elbow, despite the pain it caused him, and was looking at Pierre.

"*You?*" he cried. "You here? Eating my bread?"

"Lie down, sir!" thundered Small, rushing back to the bunk.

Pierre had sprung to his feet, his face purple with rage.

"I eat your bread because zis man make me do et," he said. "Et es not because I would do so mesel'. He make me come with him through ze storm—hold a gun at my head an' make me. Do not t'ink I do so of my own accord."

He turned his back and went to the fire. Small forced Rancour to lie flat again, and held the glass of brandy to his lips. For a time Rancour did not speak, but his eyes were always upon Pierre's back.

"PIERRE," he said finally, "I want to talk to you."

"You haf' not'ing, Rancour, to say to me."

"I have, Pierre. Come over here."

Pierre turned around with a sneer on his lips. And he saw Sylvester Small standing back where Rancour could not see him, holding that revolver in his hand—and his eyes were glittering again.

"Bring a chair and sit beside the bunk," Small commanded.

Pierre obeyed, his eyes flashing fire at the little man who ordered him about.

"Well?" he asked, sitting near the bunk, but looking across the room instead of at Rancour.

"We have been enemies for twenty years, Pierre, and before that we were firm friends."

"Yas."

"I'm not going to say what caused our quarrel, not going to open old wounds——"

Pierre flashed him one look, then turned his face away again.

"It's—it's Mary, Pierre. She has nobody but me. She gets lonesome at times. And I have to live here, to make my living by 'tending to my traps. If you'd only be friends with Mary—and with me——"

"Friends!" Pierre cried, looking toward him. "After what haf happen?"

"We've been fools for twenty years, Pierre. It would be nice to be friends again. And it would be nice for Mary, too. We could sit by the fire at night and talk over old times, and forget our quarrel. We're getting old. And we could both be fathers to Mary. Think, Pierre—*her* name was Mary, too——"

Pierre groaned and looked away again, then got up and walked to the fire and stood before it, his back to Rancour. Small fingered the revolver and waited. Presently he spoke.

"That's a sensible conclusion," he said. "Now you two old-timers and fire-eaters, listen to me. You're even as far as I can see. You both loved the same girl twenty years ago, I understand."

"You—!" cried Pierre, whirling around.

But he saw the revolver again and that glitter in Small's eyes.

"Just keep your shirt on, Pierre, until I'm done. You both loved the same girl and fought for her, and one of you won. Instead of letting that settle it, you went on fighting."

"I fought fair!" Pierre said.

"All right then—we'll say Rancour didn't. And you went on fighting every chance you got until the sheriff stepped in and made you stop it. You've been trying to hate each other since, but you've been friends all the time and don't know it. Men who have passed through what you have couldn't help but want to be friends. The fact that you both loved the same girl is enough. She's dead—don't soil her memory by keeping up this feud. And she's left a daughter you both can love. Pierre, come over here!"

The guide obeyed, because the revolver and the glitter in Small's eyes commanded it. He sat down beside the bunk again.

"Rancour," Small went on, "I think Pierre is as willing to be friends as you, only he hates to admit it. When your girl came to the cabin tonight he wouldn't come over and help you. I had to force him to guide me. It was all right after we got started. He could have done for me a dozen times, left me in the forest, told some plausible story, and nobody would have been the wiser. He brought me to you so I could give you medical attention. He was glad to do it, although he wouldn't admit it. Weren't you, Pierre?"

His eyes held Pierre's—those glittering eyes that seemed to say this man would tolerate no mutiny, that seemed to promise a bullet.

"Well?" Small asked.

"Y—yas," Pierre whispered.

"Give Rancour your hand!"

"No!"

"Give me your hand!"

The words were spoken in a low tone, but they carried a volume of meaning. Slowly Pierre's hand went out, slowly Rancour's went to meet it. But Pierre still was stubborn.

"Et es hees—lef' han'," he said. "Zat not—mean anyt'ing."

"Of course it is his left hand, you fool.

His right arm is broken and in splints."

"And it means—everything," said Rancour.

Their hands met, clasped.

"And we'll make things better for Mary now?" Rancour asked. "We can both have this Mary to love and care for."

"Yas — we make t'ings bettaire — for Mary," Pierre replied.

Small smiled and slipped the revolver on a shelf near by, and stepped toward the center of the room where Rancour could see him.

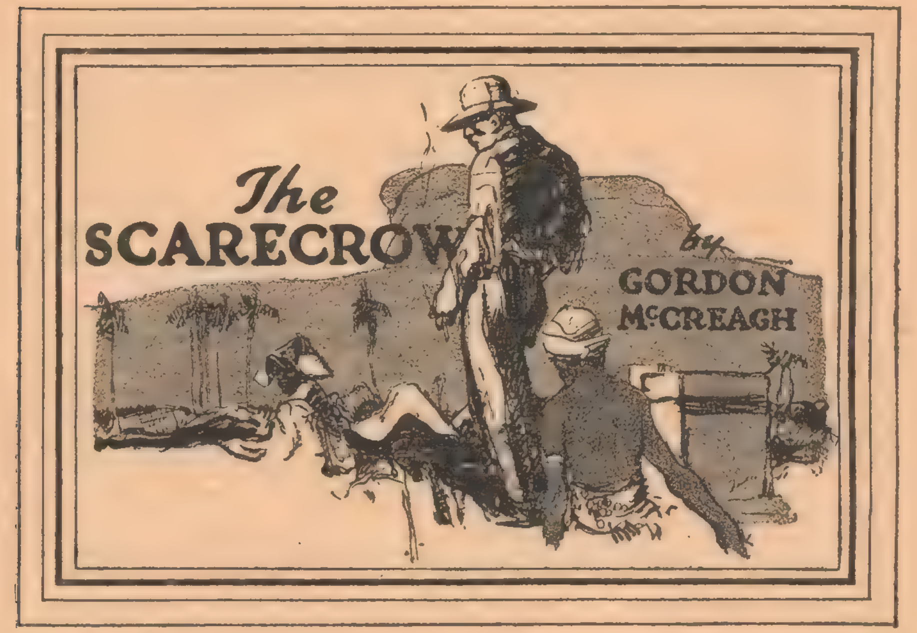
"I'm about all in," he said. "Guess I'll tumble into this other bunk and rest a bit. Pierre, you watch Rancour. Give him one of these powders every hour."

"I watch heem."

AN HOUR after daylight Pearson and Holland came, bringing Mary Rancour with them on a sled. They found Pierre sitting beside the bunk, holding the hand of the sleeping Jacques Rancour, and they found Sylvester Small sleeping in the other bunk, a smile upon his face, as if he were conscious of work well done.

"One t'ing," said Pierre, after explanations. "Zat Mistaire Small ees a ver' beeg man—not a small man at all. An' any man as would be frien' of mine will do well to remember zat t'ing!"

Mary Rancour slipped softly across the room, stooped, and brushed Sylvester Small's forehead with her lips. Small stirred in his sleep—and smiled again.



Author of "Featuring Morton St. Clair," "The Brass Idol," etc.

HE CAME shambling into camp one evening, whistling cheerily to himself and smiling out at the world in general with engaging friendliness. The fact that he had walked up the mountains the whole sixty-odd miles from the river dumping-station at Thabeitkyin, instead of taking the mule *tonga*, as the crude four-seated stage was called, proclaimed him at once as another "poor white," come up to the mines in the desperate hope of obtaining employment.

All the derelicts and failures and down-and-out white men in Burma gravitated eventually to the Mogok ruby mines with a vague reasoning that since here was wealth untold, requiring no particular study or training to obtain, therefore there must exist lucrative employment for untrained men. The usual result was that the Ruby Mines Syndicate, which worked the whole rubiferous tract under a concession from the Burma Government, was compelled to send them away again at its own expense as being undesirables and a continual source of trouble.

So invariable was this rule that the company posted glaring notices all over Thabeitkyin and in the weekly up-river steamer, proclaiming loudly that job seekers had better stay away, as jobs were by no chance available. Of course not. Nobody was going to employ nondescripts from who knows where, on work the only qualification for which was integrity.

Still they came, these stone-brokes, in the desperate hope of finding something to which a white man might turn his hand. A few, a very few, in the extremity of their need went *fantay* and, swallowing their white man's pride, toiled at manual labor among the crowd of Burmans, Hindus, Chinamen, and natives of a dozen other countries. Of course the Syndicate could not forbid this, but it was strongly discouraged, for the white man's prestige must be upheld.

Such was the prospect facing the shambling figure, yet he smiled as if the world were pleasant to look upon. Though to the unprejudiced observer he seemed to have little enough to smile about.

As he inquired his way through the camp to the one miscalled hotel, here and there a hawk-eyed overseer snatched a second from watching the native diggers to observe him and smile pityingly, or grunt callously according to his nature.

The outlook was uninviting and grim, but he was still cheerful when he entered the hotel bar and rapped on the deserted counter.

The proprietor, a shaggy Scotchman who combined the offices of manager, bell-boy, barkeep, and "chucker out" in his own completely competent person, emerged from a dim hole in the rear where popular suspicion had it that he secretly distilled the smoky "pot still" which he dispensed.

"Losh, here's anither ane!" he ejaculated as his eyes fell on the ragged figure. Then, " 'Tis a dram ye're wantin' sure, but hae ye the siller?" Then again, quickly, as the derelict felt among his rags: "Hech awa! Keep yer coin, laddie; ye'll be wantin' it sair eneugh presently, an' it's no Shon McNair that'll refuse a drappie to a puir body ance in a while."

With that he poured out a good four fingers and pushed it across.

"Thank you. I sure needed it," said the derelict in a voice oddly at variance with his attire, "and I'll take a little water with it if you don't mind."

"Man, ye're desecratin' as guid liquor as ye'll find in this God-forgotten country," grumbled the Scotchman; but nevertheless he pushed over a great pitcher of porous clay, and stood taking stock of the queer figure while he mechanically wiped down the counter and got things ready for the crowd that would soon be in.

The stranger gave him ample time as he sipped luxuriously at his drink. At last he gave a long drawn "Ah-h!" of satisfaction and turned to face the landlord.

"It's sure some pull up that last twenty miles, isn't it?" he remarked.

"Aye, it is that," agreed the other. "An' Ah ken weel ye hae trampit all the way up for want o' the *tonga* fare, sae sure as ye'll hae to tramp doon agen."

The stranger nodded.

"But why down again?" he inquired.

"Havers, man, did ye no see the muckle notices paperin' all the walls frae Mandalay up?"

"Sure, but I figured I'd take a hand at mining some on my own account."

"Man, but ye're simple! D'ye no ken that the company has the rights for the whole district, an' it'll cost ye sixty rupees to tak oot a license for every single month?"

"Can't I dig without a license?"

"God save the lad! Why there's Superintendent Gorman an' seven inspectors drawin' pay for watchin' after juist sic folks as think to mine wi'oot takin' oot their papers."

The stranger's face fell.

"Twenty bucks for a license—Jeerusalem!"

He gazed for a long while out of the door at the busy ant colony of diggers, and he suddenly seemed to the landlord to look very tired. Then his cheery optimism reasserted itself and he straightened himself up.

"Well, I'm here now, and I'll stick," he muttered.

The landlord opened his mouth to expostulate, pointing out the impossibility of bare existence; but the stranger was evicently a person of resource, for he interrupted with:

"Well, if I can't look for rubies, I'll look for orchids. There's a bit of money to be picked up in it if you know anything about them."

A big gong boomed somewhere on the hillside above them, and the shriek of winches and rattle of rockers instantly droned down, to be replaced and completely drowned out by an indescribable clamor of voices in twenty different languages, yelling and shouting like schoolboys at recess, wrangling over their tools, and screaming to each other over the general uproar as they poured into the main road to the native village.

A few minutes later a noisy crowd surged into the barroom—overseers, inspectors, tallymen, and others. As the higher officials of the company had their club to which they resorted, so, in that land of class distinction and snobbery, McNair's Hotel bar provided a meeting place for the employees.

THE seedy stranger took his drink to a side table and sat unobserved by the boisterous crew except for a casual glance here and there. The crowd was well used to his kind, and passed him over with tolerant disregard—all save one loud-mouthed individual with a purple face and swinish eyes, who from his overbearing manner was evidently a leader in his coterie. He had already absorbed as much liquor as was good for him before coming in, and he was now looking for something to sharpen his wit on. The unfortunate stranger was a gift from heaven.

"What kind of a scarecrow have we got this time?" he began, while his followers grinned in pleasurable aticipation of amusement.

The stranger looked up quickly and, as there was obviously no reply, flashed his habitual smile. The liquor in his tormentor was ready to flame into anger at the least provocation, and the smile irritated him.

"What are you grinning at, you tramp?" he demanded.

"Aw, let him alone, Allen; he ain't hurtin' anybody."

The remonstrance was enough to fan the bully's smoldering passion, and he wheeled on the speaker.

"What in ——!" he began, and entered into a loud altercation.

The landlord took advantage of the diversion to slip around to the stranger.

"Ye'd better gang awa, laddie," he warned anxiously. "Yon's a muckle loon, an' he's speerin' for trouble."

The prospective victim looked up quite undismayed.

"No sirree," he replied easily. "This is the first drink I've had in a week, and I'm not going to be scared away by anybody."

The big bully heard the concluding words, and they seemed to him a direct challenge.

"Ho, you ain't, ain't you, Scarecrow?" he snarled. "We'll see about that." And he advanced on him.

The stranger rose swiftly and moved toward the door, and some of Allen's cronies set up a shout of derision, but he wasn't going out—he had merely moved to where there was more space.

He was still smiling, but there was now an ominous tightness about the lips, and the more discerning of the loungers at the bar noticed that, though he was not above medium height, there was a depth of chest and a lithe swing to the shoulders, with a look of alert confidence in the eyes that betokened a man who, in spite of his seedy appearance, had not altogether fallen through the bottom. They saw that he was not one to relinquish his rights without a fight, and pitied him accordingly.

But all such nice distinctions were lost on the big alcoholic, who advanced belligerently, growling:

"You ain't going to get scared away, Scarecrow? Well, I'll scare you."

With that he seized the other by the shoulder to thrust him out at the door.

Then it all happened so quickly that nobody knew exactly what had passed.

Allen felt a hard drive in the diaphragm which brought his head forward with a jerk. The spectators saw a ragged coatsleeve describe a short arc in the air. There was a sharp sound like billiard balls meeting, and the bully crumpled boneless to the floor.

The stranger finished his drink, thanked the landlord and went quietly out at the door before any one had recovered from his astonishment sufficiently to speak.

The landlord was the first to find his voice. He was hopping with joy at the fall of the idol.

"Scarecrow!" he kept repeating to himself. "Scarecrow, he called him! Yon laddie luiks like ane that can scare mair nor corbies."

But the name, introduced thus forcibly into the camp, stuck; and as "Scarecrow" the stranger was known, for the rest of his stay.

A COUPLE of weeks after the surprising young man had furnished this spirited revival of the David and Goliath episode, Chief Inspector Gorman was summoned to the sumptuous office of Mr. Stuart-Wilson, Managing Director of the Ruby Mines Syndicate. This potentate was characterized by a sanctimonious expression and an oppressive manner. He was firmly convinced that he knew everything that had ever happened since the Creation; but on this occasion his habitual self-satisfied air was replaced by a heavy frown.

"Er—Mr. Gorman," he began. "I have sent for you to—ah—say that there is reason to believe that illicit mining is on the—ah—increase, to an extent that reflects distinct discredit on your staff."

Gorman shuffled uneasily. He prided himself on an overrated estimate of his detective ability, and here was his superior positively radiating scornful disapproval.

"Of course, you know sir," he began to explain, "that there is always a good deal of that going on in the jungle diggings; we get a man every now and then, but——"

"My dear Gorman, I have been head of this company for some time now—for quite some little time, and I require no instruction as to general conditions. Er—what I want to bring to your notice is—ah—that our agents in Mandalay report recent sales so far in excess of our own and our controlled output to that market as to indicate an organized system of secret mining."

"Well, sir," essayed the luckless Chief again, but the autocrat held up his hand.

"I had not finished, Gorman." After an impressive pause to let the reproof sink in, he continued: "I am convinced that a clever—ah—gang—yes, 'gang' is the only word—is operating; and it is my personal opinion that it is under the leadership of a white man, for we know that the native cannot organize. Ah—that is all, Gorman. I have informed you of the facts, and I now look to you to do your duty."

"Yes, sir," was all Gorman could say; and he turned to leave the room, fuming.

"And—er—I might add that the company has decided to offer a reward of five thousand rupees for the breaking up of the organization."

"Yes, sir."

Gorman raged within. His supercilious chief had treated him like a child and an incompetent fool, and his conceit had received a rude shock. He called a meeting of all his assistants in their bungalow common room and worked off his spleen on them in a violent denunciation of themselves, and their methods, and his superior's attitude, and everything in the camp, concluding with a final order to "Get busy and show results." Then he stormed out of the room, followed only by the man Allen, who toadied to his vanity and was therefore his constant companion.

The rueful silence which followed was broken by a freckle-faced Irishman.

"Chief Gorman seems to be annoyed," he grinned. "I'd like to have heard what the boss said to him."

"So'd I," agreed another. Then, acidly: "Gorman thinks he's darn clever, but he don't do such a lot himself; and he don't help us any neither. When I copped Maung Gaung right on the spot he said we had no case against him 'n' let him go."

"Yes, but you know that you can't get conviction unless you catch the man actually working," objected the first speaker.

"Well, an' didn't I?" came the indignant reply. "I copped him right in a pit, nosin' around, an' Gorman said because he hadn't no pick an' shovel we couldn't prove he wasn't there just out o' curiosity; an' him with a bag of stones as big as your fist."

"That's right," chimed in another voice. "That Burman's the slickest I. M. in the camp, but he'll trip some day and we'll get him all right."

"Tell you fellows what," broke in a foxy-faced individual with a superior air which he affected on the strength of having been to Cambridge University. "I have a notion that the white man at the head of this gang is none other than the Scarecrow."

"Oh, rats! That's just another of your deductive theories, Shout. The Scarecrow's all right; but trot out your theory, anyhow."

"Well, you know," defended Shout, thus challenged, "he has no apparent means of livelihood. He just potters 'round collecting orchids, as he says, to account for his absence in the jungle. What is there to prevent him from working secret diggings all day? And the boss says the increased activity is recent—that is, since his arrival."

"I don't believe it," said the first speaker. "He's always broke and ready to take a drink on anybody, but he's a good sort; and for that matter, I've seen him sending bulbs away by post."

"That may be just as a blind," persisted Shout.

"Oh, rats!" was the only comment.

But a little later an event transpired which lent some color to Shout's suspicions, and that individual proclaimed the news loudly through the camp to advertise the astuteness of his preconceived theory.

It was Shout himself (who, to do him justice, in spite of his vainglorious tendencies was a smart man and energetic) who had been prowling around in the jungles a few miles from the camp visiting some secret pits he knew of in the hope of perhaps catching somebody at work, when he picked up the trail of a white man—that is to say, the trail of a shod foot. He followed the trail to another pit, new to him, and came upon the Scarecrow—not working it is true, but lying concealed behind a bush.

Without disturbing him, he softly crept around to the other side and settled himself to watch. He lay motionless for close on two hours and presently saw the other take out a pipe and roll over on his back to enjoy a most luxurious smoke. His thoughts seemed to be running in pleasant channels, for from his vantage-point Shout could see him shaking with silent merriment. He was getting tired of this and very impatient, and was considering on the advisability of challenging the idyllic idler, when the Scarecrow at last rose and stretched himself. Shout snuggled down again, all excitement and nervous anticipation. Now he would surely see something.

But his hopes were shattered as with a trip-hammer by an easy drawl coming across the pit.

"Say, Shout, don't you think it's about time we were going home?" And the Scarecrow emerged grinning right across his face.

Shout was rabid. His cultured vanity could not abide ridicule, and the thought that this plebeian wanderer had been laughing at him for nearly two hours almost drove him to the point of assaulting him. But he thought better of it, and advanced, producing his gun and incoherently clamoring that the other was under arrest.

"Well! Well! Well! What's all the noise about, child?" said the Scarecrow cheerfully. "Put away your hardware and tell me all about it; you're carrying excess freight anyway. What am I under arrest for?"

"I want to see what you've got in that bag!" spluttered Shout.

"Roots, son; roots and bulbs What did you think? Rubies?"

"Of course, rubies, —— you!"

"Hush, dearie; you shock me. Why didn't you say so right away? Sure I've got rubies; but I don't carry them around in a sack like this. Like to see 'em?"

At that, with cool effrontery, he produced a neat little package from his pocket and showed a collection of selected stones.

"There!" triumphed Shout. "I knew it. I said so all along! Now you come along and explain how you got those stones."

"Got 'em by right of purchase, little one"—Shout topped the other by about four inches—"bought 'em off Maung Lu-Bain in the bazaar."

"It's a lie. I don't believe it!" snapped Shout.

The smile thinned down to a straight line and the iron-gray eyes went steely.

"Shout, you're very oppressively British, but you mean well, perhaps. So I'll come with you to the bazaar, and you can talk to Lu-Bain."

When they reached the bazaar, the Scarecrow with obliging confidence let Shout go to Lu-Bain's tiny shop alone, so that there might be no suspicion of collusion. The little wizened dealer examined the stones critically.

"Assuredly, Thakin, I know the stones. I sold them to the Thakin, the Pursuer of Crows."

So Shout was left to savagely confess himself circumvented, and to explain his deductions to all and sundry who came to McNair's bar, insisting that Lu-Bain was as big a rogue as the rest of them, and that the whole thing was a carefully prearranged job. The general opinion was conflicting and vacillating. Some said "Yes," and then again said "No, perhaps not." Only McNair, with the awful pertinacity of his race, had the hardihood to stick to it that "the laddie was a' richt."

"Well," summed up the Yankee Inspector who had captured Maung Gaung, "it sure looks like he's carrying the game through on his wits an' his cast-iron nerve; but anyhow, he's a slick proposition, an' we've got to take our hats off to him for a mighty cool hand. Hope I'm the one to catch him, that's all; it would be some stunt to pull off."

And the Scarecrow came and went as usual, unconcerned, smiling and mysterious.

* * *

THE tale ran through the whole camp, causing widespread merriment and much comment. It even floated in the course of a few days as high as the august ears of Mr. Stuart-Wilson, and that omniscient luminary indulged in a few scornful grunts about the inefficient bungling of his understrappers, and inquired plaintively of the surrounding atmosphere how he could be expected to run a great organization with such brainless material.

He was the more put out, since that afternoon's mail had brought him an insured package containing a stone of exceptional luster about which the company knew nothing, and which one of their agents had bought in the market at Mandalay. He worried over it till the clock struck four, and then, since he had reached his office that morning as early as ten-thirty, he decided to go to the club to see if any of the other magnates of the syndicate had arrived, and perhaps to condole with them.

As he puffed up the slight incline, who should pass him, swinging easily along, but the primal cause of all his worriment, who had now outgrown the origin of his appellation and appeared in a prosperous-looking new suit and corduroy riding-breeches?

Here was an opportunity to exercise his own superior gifts.

"Er—young man! A moment, please!"

The Scarecrow turned. The Managing Director regarded him in austere silence to wither him with his hypnotic glare and the majesty of his presence, as he would one of his own scared subordinates.

The Scarecrow broke the long silence. In some unaccountable manner this sudden confrontment with the Lord's anointed left him singularly self-possessed.

"Yes, Mr. Wilson? Er—I sure beg your pardon, Mr. Stuart-Wilson. I forgot for the moment that you carried two barrels."

The Managing Director's face took on a hectic purple and his eyes boggled. The impressive manner gave place to plain uncontrolled rage.

"See here, you!" he spluttered. "This company has had enough of your game, and you had better get out before you are taken out."

"Sure, Mr. Wil—er—Stuart-Wilson; I'm not figuring to stay much longer anyhow, and I'll leave the camp as soon as I've made a little money out of it."

"Money out of it!"

Here was insolence beyond precedent. The Managing Director frothed and slavered in a frenzied parting harangue out of which the Scarecrow gathered that the Heaven-born "had his eye on him," and that "he had better have a care and be very careful, lest a worse thing befall."

After that things moved rapidly in the camp.

The Managing Director sent for Gorman again and poured his over-strained soul out on the writhing Superintendent.

Gorman stormed into McNair's barroom, primed almost to murder, and bellowed for whisky, as was his habit when anything disturbed him. Two of his inspectors who were lounging at the bar discreetly withdrew from the sphere of his wrath, and so missed his subsequent discomfiture. The Superintendent, immediately on entering, had commenced a violent tirade against the Scarecrow, and finding McNair the only disinterested listener, filled the latter's ears with his woes. As the raw spirit began to take hold of him, he broke into a flood of incoherent invective mingled with wild threats of what he would do to the man as soon as he saw him.

The impassioned denunciation seemed to the shrewd landlord to be needlessly violent, and he wondered what lay back of it all; but he saw no reason to add fuel by giving vent to his surmises or calling attention to the possibility of reprisals, though he might have had his own opinion on the matter. He merely contented himself with saying "Ou, aye," at the needful intervals and let Gorman rave on.

"Wait till I catch him!" howled the Superintendent. "I'll get him sent up for ten years; I'll railroad him. Let me just set eyes on him; I'll give him——"

Gorman paused for want of a suitable threat.

"Yes, Mr. Gorman? What do you propose to give me?"

The Scarecrow stood in the doorway with an expression of pleased anticipation on his face, just as if he had overheard somebody announcing that he was about to give him a present.

Gorman stood with dropped jaw, taken aback for a moment. But it was due chiefly to surprise; he had courage enough, and soon recovered himself.

"You're the swine who's causing all this trouble," he snarled. "And I'm going to give you—" he had been going to say "a —— good hiding," but then he hesitated and altered it—"I'm going to run you out of this camp."

"You don't say?" inquired the Scarecrow genially. "Why, I'm not quite ready to go yet; and anyhow, you're hardly in a condition to run me out of this room, even."

Gorman took an unsteady step forward, and then he stopped and his hand began to steal around to his hip pocket.

The Scarecrow's hands were hanging loosely at his sides, but they did not move; only his smile reverted to the wolf-trap formation that McNair had seen once before.

"Better stop right there, Mr. Gorman. A little more, and you'll crowd me farther than I dare take a chance."

There was a confident menace in the tone, and Gorman in his confused state of mind hesitated again, and was lost. Slowly his hand came back.

"Ah, thank you," acknowledged the Scarecrow. "I hoped you would. Better run along home to bed now."

Gorman made a last effort to reassert himself, but in his befuddled condition found it impossible; and with a mighty imprecation he lurched out at the door.

The landlord reached below the bar and drew out a great stone crock which he kept for occasions of special solemnity and poured out half a tumblerful of the precious contents, which he pushed across with a hospitable "Hae," meaning in his own idiom, "Have one on me."

"What, all that?" laughed the Scarecrow.

"Aye, mon, but ye desairve it for a braw chiel," replied the other, and then with some hesitation added: "Laddie, let me gie ye a bit advice, an' dinna tak it amiss. Ah dinna ken yer richt business here, an' Ah'm no carin'. But let me tell ye, there's a muckle talk an' a hantle o' folks luikin' for to mak ye trouble. An' noo ye've croupit the lug o' Chief Gorman forbye."

The Scarecrow shrugged his shoulders and laughed silently.

"Oh well, I don't think he'll hurt me any."

But McNair persisted.

"Yon's a muckle revengeful loon, an' sair unforgiein', an' he'll no balk at ony ways o' doin' ye wrang; an' dinna forget that he has seven ithers to tak his orders. Sae laddie, Ah'm advisin' ye to howk yer pack the way ye came an' gang awa whiles ye yet may."

"Much obliged, McNair," said the Scarecrow. "I hope to be going in a very few days now, if all goes well."

"Aye," replied the landlord. "But make it less nor a few."

At this juncture they were interrupted by a tall overseer who came in inquiring:

"Gorman been here, you fellows? What's the matter with him? He's carrying on like a maniac and raising holy —— generally."

In the explanation which followed, the Scarecrow slipped out of the room.

The incident was the one topic of conversation among the habitual customers who dropped in for an early morning bracer on their way to work, causing secret jubilation among the inspectors and a general agreement with McNair's opinion that it behooved the Scarecrow to be very wary now.

A belated sorter entered.

"Scarecrow? What about him? I just saw him going into the Police Superintendent's office."

There was a general chorus of, "Trying to square himself in case Gorman frames something up on him."

And when they learned during the lunch interval that the Scarecrow and the Superintendent of Police had ridden out together, they gave him credit for the most ingratiating manner and persuasive tongue in the universe.

LATE that evening the news flashed through the camp that the two had returned with Maung Gaung in custody, caught "dead to rights" in the act of mining without a license. A wave of indignation followed. Hitherto men had been inclined to regard the Scarecrow as a cheerful scamp whom they had to admire for his nerve, and whom they were content to accept at his face value. Mining without a license was no very great crime in their eyes, and the rights and wrongs of it was a matter for the company to settle with the Government; but "selling his pals to save his own —— hide," as a forceful Englishman put it, was a very different thing altogether.

This explained the sudden familiarity with the policeman; and even McNair, who had stoutly championed the stranger from the very beginning for "a braw chiel," was forced sorrowfully to confess that he had been "sair mistookit."

Gorman was away somewhere when the news arrived, and did not get it till he looked in on the usual morning gathering at McNair's. He appeared greatly excited and shot several swift inquiries for details. Ascertaining that nobody knew anything about it beyond the fact that Maung Gaung had been arrested, and that the Scarecrow had probably sold him, he hurried off to the station house and burst into the police-office.

"I say, Shannon," he began without any preface, "I'd be much obliged if you would let me have a few words with the man you caught yesterday—in private."

Shannon looked coldly over his desk; he had never liked Gorman.

"Sorry, Mr. Gorman, but I don't think I can allow it."

Gorman's brow darkened.

"Why, what's the matter?" he snorted. "We've always been able to talk to the fellows."

"Quite so, Mr. Gorman. But this is a big case with a big reward; and as it wasn't one of your men who caught him, I don't think I should be justified under the circumstances in letting you see the prisoner."

Gorman blustered, then pleaded that he wanted to get important information out of the man; but the police-officer was like stone. Finally the Chief had to go out unsatisfied with a heavy frown on his face.

The Superintendent of Police looked after him thoughtfully. Something seemed to amuse him, for he smiled slowly to himself, and then reached for his ledger.

Gorman's subsequent movements were swift and mysterious. He hurried first to his bungalow and took from the little wall safe some papers which he carefully examined and hid away in his pocket. Then he called impatiently for a Burman boy who usually accompanied him on all his expeditions, and together they hastened from the house over the brow of the hill, the fashionable quarter where the Managing Director and the other big officials of the syndicate had their offices and residences, and with much caution and secrecy disappeared into the jungle beyond.

Meanwhile the Scarecrow had been acting in a mysterious way himself. He first bustled into the deserted bar and called cheerily—

"Well, McNair, I'm taking your advice, and I'm leaving the camp tomorrow if all goes well."

McNair regarded him coldly.

"Ay?" he remarked.

"And say! I want you to put up a bit of a spread tonight. I've taken drinks from many of the boys and I'd like to give it back. Guess I'll have some money by then."

"Ay?"

The Scarecrow looked at him sharply, and his face fell.

"Hm! I think I understand," he said shortly. "Well, never mind; put up the spread anyway."

He bustled out as he had come in.

McNair gazed after him sorrowfully.

"A spread, eh?" eh muttered, shaking his head. "Wi' the siller ye'll get for sellin' Maung Gaung? Och aye! It's an auld fule ye are, Shon McNair."

From the bar the Scarecrow went up the hill with the same caution displayed by Gorman and took the same road into the jungle.

An observer would have been perplexed to determine whether Gorman was watching the Scarecrow or the Scarecrow was watching Gorman.

The latter and the Burman traveled swiftly along an almost imperceptible path, with many stoppings and listenings to ascertain whether they were followed. Half an hour's journey brought them to a recently worked pit—the same where Maung Gaung had been arrested. Gorman entered and examined the ground carefully for marks or signs, which he evidently expected to find. After a short search he gave a satisfied grunt and followed some indefinite trail which led him across the pit and a few paces out on the other side to a great moss-covered stone. He grunted again, and his eyes lit as he thrust his arm under and groped. In a few seconds he drew out a little package of undressed leather.

His hands trembled with excitement as he fumbled at the knot. Then with an impatient curse he bit the cord through with his teeth, and swiftly unrolling the package, he emptied into his hand a glistening, fiery little heap of stones.

As he knelt and gloated, the figure of the Scarecrow rose like a shadow out of the bushes and stood over him.

"That's the one thing I was waiting for, Gorman."

The quiet voice struck Gorman like a bullet. He gave a violent start and wheeled; then with an animal snarl of rage he snatched at his gun.

At the same instant the Scarecrow closed with him and together they rolled into the pit in a struggling, fighting heap.

The Burman boy, who had been sitting disinterestedly idle on the other bank, rose up and fled.

Fifteen minutes later he burst panting into the Inspectors' common room and gasped that the "crow hunter Thakin" and the Chief Inspector Thakin were slaying each other in the jungle.

The three men who were present grabbed their hats and raced out, supporting the boy between them to lead the way.

As they topped the hill, they were just in time to see the combatants step into the Managing Director's office.

"Gorman's got him!" they cried. "Let's wait outside and hear the news."

But they had to wait long for their chief.

Mr. Stuart-Wilson looked up angrily at the unceremonious entry; but his face brightened as he saw the two men and noted their disheveled appearance.

"Ah, Gorman. At last!" he beamed. "Tell me about it."

Gorman was morosely silent. The Scarecrow grinned and placed the leather package on the table.

"Something to interest you."

The Managing Director opened the roll and gasped.

"Wh—What! Why! What's all this, Gorman?" And then for the first time he noticed that it was the Scarecrow who toyed with a revolver.

The Scarecrow dropped his mask of slouching insolence and became an alert, wooden-faced man of business.

"To put it briefly, sir, your Superintendent is the man you have been wanting. There is the proof. The rest is up to you; I step out of it right here, if you will be so good as to oblige me with the company's check for five thousand rupees; which, is the money I spoke of taking out of the camp at our last meeting."

The Managing Director gasped again. What? Gorman? His Superintendent? And he had never suspected it? Impossible!

"I don't believe it!" he snapped.

"I have other evidence, sir. There's Maung Gaung willing to admit now that he has been working illicit diggings in partnership with Mr. Gorman for the last two years. Shannon knows all about it; you might send for him if you care to."

The three wondering inspectors outside saw a messenger hurry away and presently return with the policeman. After a little while the door opened again and the Scarecrow emerged, alone, iron-visaged, carefully stowing away a strip of paper in his pocketbook.

THAT evening McNair's barroom held the biggest concourse it had ever known. Everybody was eagerly asking questions, and nobody knew what to reply.

Then the Scarecrow entered, and the babel of voices ceased as if broken off short as they all turned to stare at him. There was a striking alteration in the man. The smiling, half apologetic derelict had given place to an erect, hawk-eyed man of decision and action. He addressed them.

"Boys," he said, "I'm leaving the camp tomorrow, and I'd just like to work off some of the free hospitality I've received at your hands. You'll excuse me if I don't drink with you; I've had more liquor during the last month than I've tasted in ten years. But my good friend McNair will set up whatever you call for. Afterward I'd like you to join me at a little good-by spread."

Even the invitation to drink was unheeded for a moment.

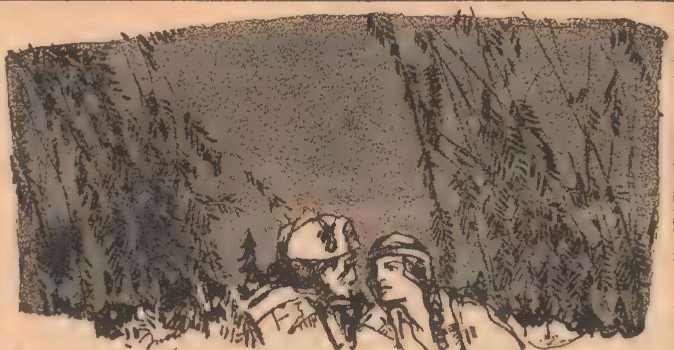
"Say, who are you anyhow?" enquired a voice.

"Well, boys, my name is Lincoln O'Neil."

"What? 'Daku'? Dacoit O'Neil, of the District Police?"

"So I've been called."

"Set 'em up, landlord!" bellowed a voice. "Set 'em up for Daku O'Neil!"



THE POSTS OF PILLAGE

A TWO-PART STORY·PART 1

by SAMUEL ALEXANDER WHITE

Author of "Proof," "The Azoic Law," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE DREAM AND THE CHALLENGE

AS THE leading canoe of the fur brigade swerved shoreward at the foot of Mushalagan Lake, Masita Dubawni stood erect, steadying herself with a hand upon the shoulder of the squat, heavy-framed, sun-smoked man who shared her seat amidships, and pointed toward a cleft in the green spruce growth above the rocky waterline.

"Father, is that the Manikuagan Portage we take?" she asked.

"Yes, Masita," he answered, "and though it is a long traverse from the heart of the Labrador to civilization, we are half-way to Quebec."

Quebec! How her heart leaped at the name! Quebec meant civilization. Like some potent magic the glamour of the South enfolded her again, and she could almost fancy herself once more there. For the years of her sojourn at the Quebec schools, though involving separation from her parents, had been very precious to her. And though she loved the North with the birthland love, there were times in the round of its seasons when she longed for respite, for change, when an unrest rose within her that she found hard to still.

Perhaps it was her awakening womanhood.

Perhaps it was the natural rebellion of her independent being against anything approaching monotony.

Perhaps it was the nomadic spirit of the wild working in her, prompting her to seek and roam.

She did not know.

But for a long time she had seen nothing else but the immensity of the North, its power, its ruthlessness, and the gentler side of her nature cried out for communion.

Dubawni Post, her home, was nothing but a log fort in the midst of a gigantic wilderness. About it, league upon league, stretched lone, timbered rivers and lakes and lone, timberless hills and plateaus and, encircling all, the silent, pulseless Barren Grounds of the Labrador.

For eight months of the year the tyranny of Winter ruled the land. For four months only did the tyrant's grip loosen, and into those four months were crowded three seasons: Spring, Summer and Autumn. In the Spring the lesser rivers broke and disgorged their floods into the great main channel of the Kaniapiskau River. Then she saw the Kaniapiskau rise in its might, a fettered Titan struggling in its wrath, till with a colossal convulsion it broke its shackles and hurled its ice-dams north into Ungava Bay.

On the run of the floods came the fur brigades from her father's free-trading posts, barter went on in a tumult, the tumult died, the free-traders vanished to their uttermost outposts, her father dropped South with the harvest of fur, and she was left alone through the mellow, transient Summer which tantalized her with its very briefness. On the verge of Autumn, Dubawni would arrive, Masita would spring to his arms and the eight-months' Winter would enfold them both, eight months of silence, frost and desolation, of snow-bound river, snow-cloaked forest and snow-drifted barrens.

There was magic, there was fascination, there was mesmerism in the North, but greater than these was the unrest within her. She longed again for the touch of her younger years and all that the touch might awake. The pageants of the old days, of the old scenes, the faces of the old friends, as if wafted up on the gulf winds, drifted clear before her mystic eyes. And clearer than anything else in the gossamer cloud-visions passed the face of François Lavergne, François the strong, the straight, the stalwart, who had loved her madly with a youthful love and wept when she went back to her home in the wilderness. Vividly she recalled that day, recalled his words at parting, for the girlish heart of her was steeped in romance and life was a lilting song.

"But I will come," François had vowed. "I will come to you across the wastes when such petty things as schools are put behind. They can not keep me within walls. I shall be a voyageur, a mighty voyageur. I shall adventure the Northland for the fur companies, and I shall be a Factor in the end. And then—and then, Masita, I shall come for you!"

But the seasons of the North had spun 'round and 'round, and the adventurous François had not come. The memory of him, strong, straight, stalwart, the echo of his words, had become as some old dream, sweet withal, but vague as the caress of these same gulf winds kissing her cheeks, and Masita wondered, unbelievingly, if she should find him in Quebec.

QUEBEC! The glamorous prospect of return to it possessed her, body and soul. She trembled with eagerness, and her hand pressed more tensely upon her father's shoulder.

"But where is Ishimanikuagan Lake you speak of?" she demanded. "For you know the Saguenay route in old Quebec is the only one familiar to me. This is new."

"Look you," Dubawni explained. "Mushalagan Lake and Ishimanikuagan Lake lie like a crescent moon snapped in the middle, with the Ishimanikuagan end drawn down somewhat. The Lower Manikuagan River we travel flows out of yon notch you see, touches the Ishimanikuagan to the southward a little, runs on and empties into the Gulf of St. Lawrence at English Bay. There we shall find the schooner to take us up-river to Quebec. But calm yourself. I know what Quebec means to you. But calm yourself, Masita. And sit down by me here or you will be tilted into the water as they swing the fur bales!"

He spoke a quick command to his brigade leader, Chambonne, in the bow. The paddlers backwatered with their blades. The craft lost momentum and, with the other canoes ranging themselves in a long line behind it, floated as light as a lily pad in to the shore.

But before it touched the flat landing-rocks, a rifle poked out of the cleft above, and a stern, bronzed face appeared above the weapon.

"Who comes there?" rang the challenge in a huge voice.

Masita stared amazed, and instantly the years swept back, for the face was the face of François Lavergne, François of old Quebec, François the strong, the straight, the stalwart, a maturer, browner, more severe face, it was true, than the face of the dauntless youth of her school-days, but even more handsome in its wild, mannish feature casting, with the glamour of adventure haunting the depths of his golden-brown eyes.

"*Mon Dieu*, father," she breathed almost unconsciously, "what a lov—I mean—" she caught the snarl of her father by her side—"what an enemy! What an enemy!"

CHAPTER II

THE STROKE OF THE ARCTIC FUR

FOR Lavergne's body had followed his face and his rifle out of the spruce cover, such a body as Masita had never seen although she had looked on many a mighty Northman.

Six feet four he loomed in his moccasins, as big as a bear, as lithe as a panther. The corduroy trousers and flannel shirt he wore wrinkled to the swell of his sinews, and through the open front of his shirt bulged such shoulder and neck muscles as only the pack and the tump-line could make.

With a thrill Masita realized that he had followed his bent. They had not kept him within walls. He had adventured. He had voyaged the Northland.

She suddenly blushed scarlet as she wondered if he had yet won the honor of a Factorship. For she was a true Northwoman, the breed who at first glance look a man through and through and scorn or admire, despise or respect, hate or love him as they look.

As Lavergne's eyes rested upon her when he emerged from the green cover, she saw him stop and start. A slow quiver seemed to pass upward through his powerful body from toe-tips to neck, but the next instant, giving no sign of recognition, he stared past her, a grimmer expression around his mouth and eyes as he confronted Dubawni.

"Who comes there?" he repeated.

Swift as a lynx Dubawni was upon his feet amidships. He knew nothing of Masita's youth-dreams and François Lavergne, and he saw nothing in the man ahead of him but a bold, and mayhap a sorry, enemy.

"What business is that of yours, renegade?" he bellowed through his black beard. "Put down that gun."

The gun remained leveled. Behind it the owner advanced a step or two nearer the Mushalagan margin.

"You are Chateaubriand Dubawni, Free-Trader, from Dubawni Post!" he observed, nodding with something approaching satisfaction as he looked the brigade over with a practised eye.

"More briefly, Briand Dubawni," spat the free-trader. "The 'Chateau' encumbrance harks back to days as well forgotten. And your own mission? Some woods plunderer, I suppose? But you have cut the wrong man's trail this time. Alone or in force I spit upon your breed. So out of the way! Back to your lair in the forest before my men land and drown you in the river!"

"You can't land here," spoke Lavergne quietly.

Dubawni's eyes, black as a night of storm, blazed like the lightning that splits the storm.

"Can't?" he thundered. "Who'll bar my path?"

Lavergne made a sign toward the spruce, and instantly all along the cleft other rifles poked forth and other bronzed faces looked over them.

"Those voyageurs," he answered. "And if they aren't enough, there are plenty more on the other end of the portage. Arctic Fur voyageurs, and I—I am François Lavergne, head voyageur of them all!"

"Arctic Fur voyageurs!" exclaimed Dubawni in a voice like a trapped bear's growl.

And Masita, affrighted, arose beside him, her hand upon his elbow.

"*Mon Dieu*, Helbaud's Company!" she breathed. "But, father, do nothing rash. You are so passionate and swift!"

Masita had seen the conflagration in his eyes, seen the swelling in the huge cords of his throat, and she understood that the name Arctic Fur was to him like a bullet in the flank of an enraged moose. For well she knew them, the fur lords of the North, the competitors of the Hudson's Bay Company, the bane of free-traders, and well she knew their leader Hillaire Helbaud, the lawless, the licentious, who as well as clashing more than once with her father in trade had cast covetous eyes on her.

"Nothing reckless, father," she besought, clinging to his squat, thick-chested, sturdy figure as the canoe lurched loosely in the lake swell. "For you know he is wicked, Helbaud is wicked, and he looks only for an excuse to oppress."

Dubawni seemed to control himself with the severest effort. The sinewy ridges on his neck quit quivering, and the lightning blaze of his eyes died to tender mellowness as they dwelt upon her anxious face.

"No, nothing reckless, *petite*, for your sake nothing reckless!" he promised. "But still I must have the thing clear, though it involves a quarrel with this scum."

Scum! It stung Masita. Yet there was justification for the appellation, and indignation, a sort of formless resentment, against François welled up within her. *Mon Dieu*, were there not respectable companies enough adventuring in the North with which to ally himself? Why must he choose allegiance to Helbaud?

The same thought was agitating Dubawni's mind as he turned to Lavergne upon the marginal rocks.

"You look to me," he declaimed, "like a

man who might follow a worthier leader. And though you are a hireling of Helbaud, my quarrel is not with you. Helbaud himself—is he among you?"

"He is at the other end of the portage," informed Lavergne.

"Then I'll take my brigade through and talk with him."

"No." Lavergne shook his head decisively. "Not one step. That's the order. You can't land your men on this portage."

"But my furs?"

Lavergne shrugged his shoulders.

"Do what you please with the furs. I haven't any orders about them."

"And myself?"

A second shrug.

"The same as the furs! Go where you like. I haven't any orders about you."

"The cunning devil!" gritted Dubawni. "He gives you no orders concerning the furs, but he knows that if I can not take them down the Manikuagan I may as well sink them in the lake or generously hand them over to him. You must know that yourself, Lavergne."

Lavergne, resting the rifle between his knees while he took a plug of tobacco and a pipe from his trousers pocket, nodded deliberately.

"Yes, I know," he admitted, slowly filling his pipe.

"Look you," went on Dubawni. "My right of way used in common with the Hudson's Bay Company and the Arctic Fur Company has never been disputed till now. English Bay and the Manikuagan have always been open waters till now, and I am beginning to wonder if Masita's journeying with me timed the stroke. Did Helbaud know she was with me?"

For an instant Lavergne's eyes turned on Masita and lighted with admiration.

"Maybe," he replied, expelling the tobacco-smoke between his firm lips. "I don't know for sure. I haven't any orders about her either."

Dubawni gave a low imprecation. Repugnant as retreat was to him, for the moment the idea of retreat entered his mind, but the next moment the utter futility of the attempt rushed upon him. All other possible southern river routes were in the possession of the Hudson's Bay Company and barred by their posts at the mouths, for Ivan Trevor, the mighty Hudson's Bay overlord, ruled the whole of the Labrador peninsula from Fort Chimo, and him, although unlike Helbaud he did not deal in guile and treachery, Dubawni held the more powerful.

Between two enemies he stood, Trevor and Helbaud, and so dominant was the passion for independence which had kept him from merging with either company that it kept him now from suddenly changing front, uniting with the Hudson's Bay and enlisting their aid against Helbaud.

"It is as Helbaud has planned, curse him!" he brooded, half to Lavergne, half to Masita by his side. "He has left but one line of action open to me. I must go on alone to see what can be done."

"No, no, not alone, father," cried Masita, catching his hands and looking impulsively into his somber eyes. "I could not stay if you go. We must go together."

"But, *petite*," he protested, "I can not take you parleying with Helbaud. You know what he is. You must stay with Chambonne and the rest."

"No, I will not stay," declared Masita. She stamped her moccasined foot with something of her father's passion so that the craft lurched heavily. "I will go. Do you think I am afraid of this dog Helbaud? I hate him. I despise him. I will face him with you, and he shall see fear in neither one. Father, do you hear? I am going. If you do not let me go with you, I will run over the portage after you. There, make it easy for me and say I may go along!"

She raised pleading, pouting lips toward him, and Dubawni leaned and kissed her.

"*Par Dieu*," he breathed with a thrill, "but in this moment you are like your mother, as like as the fawn is to the doe. She lives again in you. You bear her heart. You speak her words. For so she spoke that day of the sack of Opawika Post."

A moisture dimmed Masita's dark eyes, and a quiver came up in her throat.

"Ah, it can not be that I am so like her!" she murmured, turning her eyes away lakeward. "Never so brave as she was and never, never, so fine! And please, father, speak not of her now when I would be fierce. The memory of her softens, melts me, breaks my spirit, and I must be steel to defy Helbaud. Speak not—now. Tell Fr—tell the head voyageur we go."

Dubawni swung around to Lavergne.

"You have heard?" he demanded. "We

go, my daughter and I, to speak with Helbaud."

Lavergne, smoking silently upon the rocks and looking over their heads, nodded briefly.

"I do not know what the outcome of our parley will be," the free-trader went on, "but you know, Lavergne, that it is wisdom up here always to be prepared for the worst. One thing I see plainly: We can't get back to Dubawni Post with these furs. Loaded canoes can not show sterns to empty ones in a chase. So my men will throw the fur bales off on the margin."

Again Lavergne nodded.

"But they had better hand over their guns while they do it," he suggested.

"No," growled Dubawni," the guns will not be handed over. They will lie in the canoe bottoms, and I give my word that they will not be lifted."

"All right," shrugged Lavergne. "I take your word for it!"

CHAPTER III

THE PLUNDER OF THE WILD

DUBAWNI'S brigade leader Chambonne, a big, pure-blooded Frenchman, hawk-nosed, heavy-mustached, stepped out of the bow of the canoe into the shallow water. At a sign from him, the crew of the second of the half-dozen six-fathom fur canoes joined him.

They stood knee-deep in the surf alongside Dubawni's craft and began to lighten it of its roped fur bales. As each bale was removed, the craft rode higher and higher out of the water. The huge, curved bow and stern, emptied first of their weight, towered over the men's heads, and to lift the bales amidships some had to press down the gunwales of the canoe while the others lifted the bundles over.

Wrestling with the lashings of the last fractious bundle, Chambonne leaned far over the gunwale so that his head was close to Dubawni's.

"Shall we charge them?" he muttered in French, as if anathematizing the slippery ropes. "Give the word and the men will be out of the water and over the rocks before this unconcerned monster can drop his pipe."

"No," commanded Dubawni, bending to assist with the bale, "make no mad move. He has the eye of an osprey, for all his seeming unconcern, and his men in the spruce cover will have their guns trained on us all. Were Masita not here, I do not know if even in the face of that I should sit so quiet. But she is here. So make no mad move to invite a volley, Chambonne. Besides, I have given my word of honor."

"Bah!" snorted Chambonne contemptuously. "It takes two to make a bargain of honor, a man of honor to give the word and a man of honor to accept. Helbaud's code is this man's code, and the shadow of honor can not be in him. Had you been fool enough to surrender the rifles, where would we be now? Word of honor to any liege of Helbaud's? Bah, again!"

"Still it does not matter. It is my word, is it not? I have passed it, and I abide by it. Lift no weapon. Go on with the unloading."

If Dubawni's craft with its load had floated as light as a lily pad, it now without its load floated as light as a blotch of foam, a superb piece of canoe building, fashioned of large sheets of birch bark fiber-sewn as fine as a moccasin, gum-sealed as tight as a drumhead. Graceful as a Northern swan it rose and fell upon the swell of Mushalagan, and the girl standing up in it and pressing with the point of a paddle against the rocky shore-wall to keep the fragile side from chafing seemed modeled as part and parcel of it.

The lines of her figure were as lithe and as clean as those of the craft which poised her high on the crests of the slow-rolling waves or nestled low with her in the troughs. Graceful with the grace of the wilderness-born, she balanced herself upon the soles of her amber caribou-skin moccasins and seemingly without volition or forethought swayed with ease and suppleness this way or that to the caprice of wind and water.

Chambonne and the other brigade men, catching sight of her thus as they waded to the shore with the bales, paused and stared, and the Northmen's hearts of them leaped. For she was their leader as much as Dubawni, their idol and their faith.

Though her years were a bare twenty she seemed to have queened it over them for a long time, ever since the day Dubawni had brought her back from Quebec, an elf of fourteen, and they had tossed her in play to the roof-beams of Opawika Post, the free-trader's former headquarters before he left the older Quebec to adventure farther northward in the newer Labrador. And though the curve of her hips to the supple waist and the swell of the bosom above the waist to her nymph-like shoulders betrayed the quick maturity which is the Northwoman's attribute, she still seemed to them the gipsy child.

Chambonne stared at the curving white neck he had so often encircled with his great, brown fingers, at the wild-rose cheeks he had dimpled, the delicate ears he had pinched, the waving blue-black hair he had smoothed and at the wide, dark eyes full of mysticism and dreaming which had rested on his own as she drank in some wondrous tale of his roamings, and he heaved a great sigh as the fur bale, tilted from his shoulder, thudded on the rocks at Lavergne's feet. He realized that the child companionship, the child-love was all that he or any of his men might claim. They were not of her day or generation, for their hard-bitten hearts were old in Dubawni's service and the flame of their youth had burned in another day.

So he heaved his sigh and drew a big intake of breath as he turned to slop out again in his saturated moccasins.

"Tired, maybe?" ventured Lavergne.

Chambonne scowled at him over his shoulder, for the youthful virility of the voyageur smote through his retrospection like a fist in his face, and without a word beckoned for the rest of the brigade to draw in in a body.

At his beckoning the rows of paddles along the sides of the great crafts dashed in, and the crafts themselves leaped forward like suddenly launched arrows.

"Hold on, there!" yelled Lavergne, leveling his rifle at the curling spray. "Don't come that fast. You can't rush me. Slow them down or we'll fire."

And Dubawni shot a significant glance at Chambonne.

"Slow them down," he ordered.

Chambonne held up his hand. The paddles back-watered stiffly.

In a huge wash of surf the brigade slowed down and, writhing along for a hundred feet like some giant water-serpent, came lethargically to the landing.

Their crews jumped out into the lake surf, all red-shirted Frenchmen and uncontaminated Indians, for Dubawni had a fierce scorn of mongrel races and put his trust in no mixed blood-strain. They were a wild and motley horde, and the sheer brawn of them was such as to smite the senses with delight.

Powerful enough, they looked, to force the portage in such a smashing charge as Chambonne had advocated, but bitterly the free-trader understood that even these could not prevail against Lavergne's band, entrenched as they were behind the rocky ramparts of the lake shore, and bitterly he understood that Helbaud would have much larger reserves at the other end of the portage. Helbaud had timed his ultimatum according to his purpose, and he was not the man to be caught lacking force to back that ultimatum.

Thus the only outlet at the present moment for all this leaping, quivering, primitive brawn was the hurling of the rest of the fur bales ashore, and mightily the hurling was accomplished with many a grimace and curse and threat at the impassive Lavergne.

In a monstrous pile Dubawni's cargo rose upon the rocks, a whole year's plunder of the wild, gathered at the posts of pillage in the depths of the hinterland. Pelts there were from the Kenogamistuk country, from the Kenogamisi, the Machistan, the hundred headwaters of the Kaniapiskau and from all the lakes of the Central Plateau from White Winter east to Attikamagen.

"*Diable*, what a gift!" groaned Chambonne, nodding toward the huge heap of prime lynx, wolf, fox, mink, marten, beaver and otter skins as he came wading through the water to Dubawni's canoe and drew himself up dripping to his former place in the bow. "What a gift to Helbaud!"

"It was either that or throw them into the lake," snarled the free-trader, wounded more than he cared to show at the loss of the spoil that was going over to his enemy. "You know we would never have got back to Dubawni Post with them. Weighted down, we could do nothing; but now the fleet is cleared for flight. And look you, Chambonne—" raising his voice so that Lavergne and every man of Helbaud's hidden in the spruce could not fail to hear every word—"if I do not come back across the portage within the hour, you will command in my place and strike north up the Manikuagan for Dubawni Post."

Grimly he held out his palm as a stepping-stone for Masita's foot between the canoe and the rocks and himself clambered forward to the bow, pausing to take spring with one of his moccasined soles off Chambonne's shoulder before launching after her.

"A blind, Chambonne," he whispered in the ear that was close to his knee. "A blind! You will switch eastward out of the Manikuagan up its Kawikwanipinis branch. Await me above its mouth. If all turns out well, I shall come to you there before dawn in one of Helbaud's small craft, but if I do not come by dawn shift for yourselves. Go on up the Kawikwanipinis. You may manage escape through Mistinik Lake at the source!"

CHAPTER IV

THE GLORY OF THE PACKER

THE portage led up through the spruce growth over the rampart of rocks which sheltered Lavergne's band, and the men at a signal from Lavergne emerged from their entrenchments and took up the packs which they had dropped for their weapons at the coming of Dubawni. The packs, huge heterogeneous bundles lying by the trailside, were bound both ways across the portage, the pelts from the Arctic Fur posts bound down, the supplies for those same posts bound up.

Dubawni saw the voyageurs vieing with each other in the number of pounds they could carry, competing with rough ribaldry, jostling and horse-play, slipping the tump-lines 'round enormous loads of furs upon their foreheads, bending their backs and having some comrade pile more bales across their necks till they could hardly stagger.

He saw them go down thus, and he saw others come up with a barrel of pork atop a sack of flour on their backs and a brown paper cigarette between their lips, and he knew he was matched against no tyros, but against the far-faring Northmen of the Arctic Fur and the giant packers of Montreal who could walk seven hundred paces under seven hundred pounds. The carry swarmed with them, Northmen and Montrealers, packing in relays, and among the furs upon their backs Dubawni marked his own bales going down.

Unladen, Lavergne stalked ahead of them, as if to show the way. In the enormous loads of his men he exhibited no interest. Seven hundred pounds was an old story to him. On occasion he had packed as high as nine, and as he came to a small chasm in the rocky path of the portage he smiled amusedly at the efforts of a short, broad, gorilla-built Montrealer who was stuck upon the ten-foot pitch. He had a sack of flour, a barrel of pork and a bale of trade-cloth heaped on high above his tremendous neck. On the level the load had not bothered him, but on the pitch it anchored him securely. Strain as he might, he could not ascend an inch of the last half of the slope, and stubborn as an Eskimo he would not give up the fight and descend.

His comrades paused to watch, roaring with laughter and chaffing him in all manner of words, and through the outbreak Lavergne still smiled amusedly.

"Can't you make it, Betarde?" he asked.

"*Mon Dieu*, I'm guess not," panted Betarde. "I'm hate for admit it to dem howlin' *canailles* but I'm guess not. *Ciel*, an' I'm try her on a bet an' get de barrel oop ba maself!"

"Wait! Wait!" laughed Lavergne, as he leaped down to him. "Don't let yourself slip back. Just a minute!" He whirled in front of the struggling Betarde and crouched low under him with bent back. "Lean forward. That's it. Now cling with your knees while I take my grip on your thighs."

Masita, as breathless as any of the throng of packers above, saw François's fingers sink into Betarde's thighs, saw his whole gigantic frame lift and move upward and deposit Betarde, flour, pork, trade-cloth and all on the top of the chasm.

The packers burst into a thunder of acclaim, but Lavergne slipped quickly down the pitch again and on across the portage.

"*Mon Dieu*," breathed Masita again, as she followed in her father's wake, "what a lov—I mean, what an enemy! What an enemy!"

They came out of the spruce cover at the other end and descended a gradual rock-incline to the river which, roaring past them behind the screen of forest, swung around in front again below a granite headland.

Here the stream widened, flowing deep and strong, flanked by a long, low, flat rock-beach whereon sprawled straggling log warehouses, sheds and tents. The open doors of the warehouses were crammed with furs, supplies and trade goods. Under the sheds they were accumulated in roof-high piles, and canvas flies, stretched haphazard here and there, accommodated the overflow.

It was plain that business of enormous magnitude was going on with Manikuagan the entrepôt, the last depot in the South from which to launch northward, the gateway between the claimed land and the unclaimed.

Amid the straggle of long, low log buildings rose one of loftier pretensions, and Dubawni knew it for the headquarters of the depot, the abiding place of Hillaire Helbaud. To this long log hall Lavergne stalked straight across the flat rock-beach. As they dropped to the level of the river, the towering spruce shut out the westering sun, and the first shadows of evening touched the umber water. A bell rang in the long hall, and the relay of packers bound up the portage dropped their tump-lines and packs and swarmed into a side doorway.

"Supper," explained Lavergne tersely, as he flung open the front door. "The dining-hall is at the other end. This is Helbaud's council-hall. Enter!"

CHAPTER V

ULTIMATUM

BEFORE Dubawni and Masita stretched a long, narrow room, papered with maps, decorated with gear and trophies of the North, with a great table at the farther end chaired about and heaped high with documents and a litter of paper of all kinds. At the head of the table sat Helbaud, tall, slender, a dandy of the woods compared to the uncouth packers in his train, with the polish of an old-world courtier and the domineering air of a Marquis.

The uncommon swarthiness of his face betrayed a mixed blood-strain, but he had taken every pains in the matter of dress and toilet to proclaim the fact that he considered himself French.

This proclamation could be read in his sleek, black, carefully smoothed hair, in his clean-shaven, powdered cheeks, in the sharp-pointed, well-waxed mustache which tapered as fine as a cobbler's sewing bristle and in a dozen other eccentricities of person and costume. If he had not been born French, he had studied the French, and none but those like Dubawni who knew his origin could have pierced his masquerade.

"You son of a *coureur de bois* and a Montagnais squaw," roared Dubawni, as he came up the room at a half-run. "You robber, you slime-born robber!"

In his rage he had forgotten Masita and the need of controlled parley. He sprang at Helbaud over the corner of the table, but he brought up against a solid ring of Helbaud's lieutenants, clerks, interpreters, post-keepers, gathered from the ends of the earth and sitting in conference with him. They ringed Helbaud 'round, and the latter, half-arisen, glared through their ranks into Dubawni's contorted face.

The birth-taunt had bitten deeply, and all his vaunted polish, all the veneer he so assiduously assumed could barely control the feline blood of him. His swarthy face worked convulsively, his eyes sprayed fire, and the wire-pointed mustache ends quivered like the whiskers of a cat.

"But—but you are a barbarian," he gritted, as if excusing himself for not taking physical revenge, "a brute, Dubawni. For since you know not the force of polite words, you must be clubbed with rude. Sit down while I talk."

He pointed out a chair for Dubawni and with a smirking bow indicated another for Masita.

But Dubawni toed his chair across the room, and Masita's eyes sparkled at the kick.

"Good!" she exclaimed. "We sit not down with plunderers and thieves. By what right, Hillaire Helbaud, have you taken my father's furs and interfered with him upon a traveled highway?"

"*Mon Dieu!*" breathed Helbaud, running his bold eyes over her. "Need you ask?" He made a gallant sweep of his slender person. "And do you think my mind runs to furs when he carries greater wealth?"

"Pah!" scorned Masita.

And Dubawni crashed his fist down on the table among a muddle of papers and books.

"Have done!" he thundered. "I will not have you speak to her. You will speak to me alone. And, by Heaven! You will talk man-talk, Helbaud, or I will break through your ring of curs!"

"It is as ever," observed Helbaud, wagging his sleek head commiseratingly. "There is no diplomacy or subtlety in you. You must have things bare and blunt. I had negotiations planned out for you—amalgamation—absorption, but you must speak of robbery and hurl insults at large like stones. Let us go back to the beginning, to this Cambrian Lake post of yours." He drew forward upon the table a map of the Ungava Peninsula and pointed to the expansion of the Kaniapiskau River. "You went up here——"

"After the Arctic Fur Company sacked my Opawika Post," interrupted Dubawni, his eyes burning.

Helbaud made a deprecating gesture.

"What did you expect?" he demanded. "The Opawika was our territory. You were a poacher, and you would heed no warning."

"And I heed no warning now!" roared Dubawni. "You drove me out of Quebec to the unclaimed land, and in that unclaimed land I have worked up my trade. Now you try to interfere with me again. You offered me amalgamation, you offered me absorption a hundred times, and I told you to go to the devil. I tell you so now and in all finality.

"I am a free man in a free country. These are not the old lawless days when the Northwesters, the Hudson's Bay, the Little Company, the X Y Company and a score of other concerns ravaged each other's posts and spilt each other's blood. And look you, the French government of Quebec to which you are so fond of claiming allegiance has no authority over the territory in question. It is under the jurisdiction of Newfoundland. I am Newfoundland French of the purest strain, and I stand within my rights."

"So?" sneered Helbaud. "Wiser heads than yours or mine have been cracked over that same question. But I am no lawyer or judge. My business is organization, and you interfere with it. See—" laying a finger on the location of Dubawni Post—"it is a strategic point, and I admit that your choice of it was a stroke of genius.

"The Kaniapiskau is the great highway of that central basin; and you command the approaches to it on three sides, east, west and south. But in commanding them, you tap our trade at its source. You divert our furs to your post, and the bales you have just grown so wrathy over were in all probability taken in the first place by men upon our books. It is a hardship. It is, to put it mildly, trade seduction. We propose to stop it. We would like to stop it without interfering with you, but that on account of your attitude seems impossible. Why not consider the thing sanely, Dubawni? Why not make some compromise before it is too late?"

"And give up my status as a free man?" snarled Dubawni. "Become a hireling of yours like these hundreds upon the portage, like that gorilla Betarde we met or—or that hulking Lavergne?"

Masita started and looked around, but François had not followed them in. Was he ashamed, she asked herself? Her cheeks burned at the thought, and the eyes of Helbaud shrewdly fastening on her only made the flush flame deeper.

"Ho, ho!" exclaimed Helbaud meditatively. "He has caught your eye, eh? I have always wondered what there was in mere size to attract a woman's eyes. For size is not the man, and——"

"Will you quit!" flashed Masita. "Turn to the business in hand. And be quick, lest my father does not contain himself."

"As you like!" returned Helbaud, with a spark of passion. "I will be quick and plain. Dubawni, I offer you a price from the Arctic Fur Company for your furs and post. In other words, you will merge with us, your post will go upon our district, and you will run it in our interests."

"I will run nothing in your interests," spurned Dubawni. "I will make no alliance with you. My post stands independent, as it always did. And just to prove to you that there is not the remotest chance of coercing me, I will tell you that I have turned down the very same offer from a bigger and more honorable company than yours."

"The Hudson's Bay?" grated Helbaud.

"The Hudson's Bay! And the offer was made through a bigger and more honorable man than you. Look you, do you think I yield to your arguments when the voice of Ivan Trevor failed to move me?"

Ivan Trevor! How the council-hall stilled to his name, a name that had rung across the North as no name had rung before. Helbaud's associates glanced about furtively, one to another and back again, and Helbaud himself half swung around to the door as if expecting to see the Chimo Factor arise from nowhere and step in to confront him.

But the council-hall was empty, and in its stillness the din of the dining-room adjacent to it rose in a tumult. Men laughed, joked and shouted as they ate, and the clash of the serving of tin dishes echoed like the sound of cymbals.

Helbaud turned back to the free-trader, his lips thinned down to a straight line under his pointed mustache.

"I care not for the Hudson's Bay," he boasted. "I care not for Ivan Trevor. When I have done with you, I will see to him and his monopoly. You disguise a threat under ostensible information, but the threat has no effect. And though you changed front at this moment and amalgamated with Ivan Trevor, it would do you no good, for I am strong enough to smash you both."

"Bold words! Bold words!" sneered Dubawni. "I would that Ivan Trevor were here to listen."

"In my own good time I will be where he can listen. But if you are wise you will listen now. Sell, or be forced to sell! That's my ultimatum to you."

"There is no force in this camp or in this province to make me sell."

"Think again. There are ways and means to force you. I have made my offer, an offer that inflicts no loss upon you, and I give you till dark to consider it. Till dark, no longer! When night falls you will either be one of the Arctic Fur Company or you will be— But what is the gain of anticipating? I know by nightfall you will be one of us, and your daughter, too!"

"Never, never!" declared Masita, furiously. "I hate you, Helbaud. I despise you. My father's scorn of you is to mine as the Southland zephyr is to the Northland blizzard. You are a dog, low-caste and black-hearted, and your end will be violent and bloody."

"*Mon Dieu*, but I like the spirit of you!" breathed Helbaud, lifting up the shield of irony to screen the writhing of his being under her lashing tongue. "But you will be wise, I know, and not tempt your father to a rash decision. That is why I am giving you time. And, meanwhile, will you eat? I and my associates have had nothing under urgency of work since noon, and the call of supper comes opportunely. You, too, have long hours and long miles behind you, and food will no doubt be most welcome. Therefore, come and dine."

He threw open the door connecting the council-hall with the dining-hall and motioned the girl to pass through first, but Masita recoiled from his outstretched hand.

"Not a bite! Not a crum!" she refused, her eyes ablaze. "Not a sip of water in any house of Helbaud's!"

And Dubawni, his big hands slipping over her shoulders and tilting her chin up, gazed into her blazing eyes with admiration.

"*Par Dieu*, well spoken!" he lauded. "We break no bread with him."

"As you will, then," returned Helbaud malignantly. "Ripe judgment sits on fasting they say. Therefore, I take it your decision will be sage enough!"

He swept them a mocking bow and minced along at the head of his associates into the dining-hall.

CHAPTER VI

HELBAUD'S HENCHMEN DINE

KEEN with the zest of Mushalagan's winey air were the appetites of Dubawni and Masita, and the sight of the laden tables in the messroom only tantalized them in their hunger. But they would rather starve than give sign of it, and they gazed on the feast of healthy, virile men with impassive faces.

Great, long tables ran down the middle of the room, and at these the motley canoemen gorged themselves after their herculean toil of the portage. Their menu was varied, for each dined according to his breed and the menu of his fathers before him. Some feasted on fish taken from the ice-cold waters of the Mushalagan, the Ishimanikuagan and the swift-flowing Manikuagan River itself.

Others gnawed the wholesome white breasts of partridges, taken in the hills that flanked the Manikuagan shores. While others devoured venison by the pound, venison salted after the manner of the white man or dried after the manner of the savage.

Some few ate pork, but these were the ones of hopelessly mixed blood-strain, half-breeds, quarter-breeds and what-not-breeds, whose line of descent was an unfathomable mystery.

The white men among them ate whatever was at hand. With calm impartiality they helped themselves to four different meats in as many courses, but it was noticeable that Indians as well as whites favored the famous hominy dish.

For to the man who packs from dawn to dark over the rocky footpath of the portage, or wades the white-water at the end of a tow-line, there is no food so sustaining as hominy, and every man who follows the northern trails knows the recipe for its making and can season it to his peculiar taste. Over his camp-fire he will set a quart of Indian corn to boil in a gallon of water, and after two hours of boiling throw in a handful of caribou suet or pork fat.

The corn immediately disintegrates into a stiff paste which is the famous hominy. Seasoned with salt, it is ready for use, and the quart of corn and the handful of fat will provision a hard-working paddler or packer for a day and a night. Rough fare it is, but it contains the essences of vitality.

But of hominy, pork and the coarser fares, Masita saw that Helbaud would have none. His table ran crosswise at the head of the messroom, and it was decked out as befitted a dandy, a courtier, a high-born gentleman such as he was.

No clattering tin dishes loaded it down. Upon a snowy cloth, plain but sparkling silver accompanied spotless porcelain, and in the center rose a huge bank of the luxurious flowers of the wilderness. It was the month of July, and though it was but greening Spring back at Dubawni Post, here farther south febrile Summer was glowing and painting the forest with the crimson of flower and the chrysoprase of fern.

AROUND the inviting board Helbaud and his clerks, guides and interpreters dined as befitted lords of the North. To the prosaic resources brought by schooner from Montreal to English Bay, where his river fleets of canoes were accustomed to meet them, was added the toil of the virgin wild. They feasted royally upon crisp, browned namaycush, roast venison, sliced beef, cold partridge, peas, corn, potatoes, butter and snowy wheat bread.

For drink there was milk and tea, and when the eating was finished and the fragrant cigars lighted, there were added wines and spirits of divers kinds.

Prodigally the spirits flowed, and not at the head table alone but upon the canoemen's board.

There a large keg of rum was broached, and the noisy drinking, laughter and song dinned forth in a babel. Primitive to the core in all things, there was nothing so primitive as their thirst, and from the first gulp, Masita and Dubawni beheld them grow swiftly riotous and insolent.

"*Mon Dieu!*" growled Dubawni. "The man is a devil, I see. He is wise enough to know that packers drunk tonight are not worth their board tomorrow, yet he starts them forth on a debauch. And for why, *petite?* You can guess it, eh?"

"They will be his tools to force you," returned Masita fearfully. "Oh, father, is this the day of inquisition? *Mon Dieu!* Must a free man be compelled to face—torture? Ah, father, it must not be. I will not let it be. I will speak to François. I will plead, I will beg, I will go down on my knees to François and——"

"François?" demanded Dubawni sharply. "The head voyageur? You speak familiarly. Don't tell me you know the dog!"

"Some — somewhat," blushed Masita hesitatingly. "That is to say, in Quebec, in the young days, father, he was one who took the schooling."

Dubawni's face hardened as he read the confusion in her eyes.

"*Par Dieu*, and if I mistake not he took more than schooling. But whatever there may have been between you is childish. It is dead, Masita. You shall not resurrect it, and you shall not trade on old associations to beg mercy off any cur of Helbaud's. I had rather——"

Dubawni paused, his wilderness instinct sensing a presence near, telling him that he was overheard.

He wheeled toward the front door of the council-hall to see Lavergne's big form bulking in the opening.

The voyageur's eyes were not upon them, but upon the scene of reveling visible through the other doorway which led into the messroom. He seemed to wait tensely, furtively, till no eye in the messroom looked his way. Then he made a sign, brief as the flash of a bird's wing, to Dubawni and Masita and was gone with the swiftness of a wolf.

"Ah!" breathed Masita, a tremor beating in her bosom. "I am right, father. He is not evil. He is not one of them. It may be that the foolishness of youth and the love of adventure has led him astray and caused him to cast in his lot with Helbaud. But his eyes are the same. *Mon Dieu*, and I will swear that his heart is the same. He is honest. He is good, and he has pity. And, father, do you see the difference? We did not go to him. He came to us. He remembered, and he came to us. Why should you deny yourself the chance of his aid?"

"*Ciel!*" blurted Dubawni. "You are right. It must be that he repents, is ashamed of his company. And no branded bond-slave of Helbaud's would dare offer us aid in the face of Helbaud's orders. This François of yours must be of a different breed. I will go out. I will see——"

"No, no!" cried Masita hastily, pulling him back. "It is no work for you. If Helbaud or any of his men saw they would at once grow suspicious. Let me go. None will be suspicious of me. I shall get his word. I shall bring you good news, father, and meantime, keep well within sight of the drinkers here. They will not suspect."

Light as a fawn she sprang away from him, her moccasins making no sound on the council-hall floor, and the next instant she had drifted through the doorway at the front.

Dubawni, blocking the other doorway against any curious gaze with his shoulder touching the jamb, breathed with relief as she disappeared. A sudden exaltation thrilled him. Helbaud's stroke had not yet won. There was still a nebulous chance.

CHAPTER VII

FRANÇOIS LAVERGNE REMEMBERS

BUT once outside Masita was careful not to rush. She walked slowly, apparently aimlessly, over the flat rock-beach in front of the council-hall.

Down by the river, his back to her and his eyes impassively fixed upon the swift-gliding river waters, stood François. Farther along the shore paced the gorilla-built Betarde, doing sentinel duty by the water's edge. Canoes lay about in profusion, and Masita idly noted that François stood very close to one.

Other men were about, the second relay waiting for their meal and cursing their fellows who lingered so long over the rum. Off the portage came the packers who had been bound down when the supper bell rang, and these deposited their bales of furs under the sheds and joined the throng about the dining-hall door.

While up the rocky path of the portage itself a solitary sentinel paced along against the orange sky.

Masita noted these things subconsciously, as it were, and they worried her since they lessened the chances of any daring break which François Lavergne might make.

Betarde's eyes took in everything that went on, and the sentinel on the portage looked down on them as from a tower.

Lethargically, as one in despair and cherishing no hope, she angled off from the council-hall toward the gap of the portage, turned irresolutely several times, scanned the fringing spruce as if considering its possibilities as a hiding-place and resignedly wheeled back along the water's edge.

Betarde, watching her, came quickly forward, as if to warn her away from the canoes, but Lavergne nodded unconcernedly toward him.

"There is no need," he observed gravely. "I am here."

And Betarde, remembering how the head voyageur had saved him his bet at the chasm on the portage, nodded knowingly and paced back to the lower end of the beach.

"François! François!" exclaimed Masita tremulously. "You remembered. I knew you would remember."

He turned from the river, and Masita saw that the stern, impassive face that had greeted them on Manikuagan Portage was aglow with tenderness. It was not the same face, yet it was his face, the face of François the youth. The fire of hope, ambition, dreams, touched his cheeks crimson as of old, and the light of an exalted worship burned in the golden-brown eyes.

"*Mon Dieu*, François, you wore a mask!" she cried. "You wore a mask, but you remembered all the same."

"Remembered?" he echoed tensely. "But I have never forgotten. There was no day when I didn't remember. And I have tried to come where I could speak with you, but when people are in different companies, that is not always easy. I could not even send a message. I knew where you were, but I could send nothing. You understand? The rivalry is bitter in the Labrador, and one stands with one's company to the death."

"So?" flashed Masita, her indignation getting the better of her. "You cleave thus to Helbaud, to a dog, to a——"

"No, no!" interrupted Lavergne. "I am no liege of Helbaud's. Surely you knew me better than that, Masita. In the old days would I have joined such a rascal as Helbaud? No, you say. Well, I am the same still. My heart is the heart you knew and my code is the code you knew. Helbaud? The Arctic Fur? Masita—" he paused to gage the distance of Betarde and the waiting packers, then lowered his voice to a mere whisper—"put Ivan Trevor in place of Hillaire Helbaud, then you have my allegiance. I am the Chimo Factor's brigade leader, and I am here as a spy. Of all his men the Factor chose me because none of Helbaud's company had set eyes on me before. You see it was only last Winter I was transferred to Fort Chimo from the Hudson's Bay post on the Great Whale!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE SHADOW OF IVAN TREVOR

"*MON DIEU!*" gasped Masita.

Then joy rushed over her, such joy as might have been caused by the admission that he belonged to her own band of free-traders.

"Thank God, François! Thank——"

"Hush, not so loud," he warned, catching her by the arm. "Betarde has wonderful ears, and the packers are getting curious. I had better make a show of putting you back from the waterline. Rock that nearest canoe with your foot, and I shall put you back."

With a sweep of her toe Masita set the canoe rocking, and at the same time she pointed riverward with a harsh laugh.

Lavergne echoed her laugh, and shook his head good-naturedly. He put out a hand gently and calculatingly upon her arm and moved her beyond reach of the craft lying on the beach.

Betarde and the packers saw in the movement nothing but a natural precaution, but the simple touch of François's fingers on her bare forearm bridged the gap of the years, and the magic of the old days enveloped them both. For a second Lavergne lost and forgot himself in the glamour of her dark eyes, then he straightened up with a jerk of recollection.

"I have to guard against false moves," he rapidly observed, "against the natural moves. I play a part, and most of all I must not be unmasked now."

"Yes, yes, go on," she urged excitedly. "I am so glad, François, that I might have been careless and endangered you. But you understand? Though you are an enemy, you are an honorable enemy, and it is the joy of that knowledge that sings through and through me. But explain. You are here on a mission, a dangerous mission?"

"Dangerous?" Lavergne shrugged his enormous shoulders. "I don't know. But I do know it is a necessary mission. Helbaud thinks that we sleep on Ungava Bay, but if he stayed awake as much as Ivan Trevor he might feel less secure. 'Go you,' the Factor said to me in the Spring, 'and get on with Helbaud as a voyageur. Perhaps he will make you his head voyageur, what of your strength and skill. And you will mark what he does and report to me at the appointed place.' That was in Seven Islands Post, Masita. You know it—over on the St. Marguerite River, not so far away. And in telling you this remember I am giving away a company secret, but you may know since the plan is not formed against you."

"He is at Seven Islands?" whispered Masita in an awed voice. "Ivan Trevor is at Seven Islands Post?"

"Nearer than that," Lavergne informed. "You may know, I repeat, because this plan is not formed against you. Helbaud thinks he works unnoticed like a beaver, but the Hudson's Bay Company marks every move he makes. The Factor knew of his activity gulfward, knew that he had some tremendous project under way, knew what your father did not know, Masita. For, listen, the stoppage of your father's right of way and the seizure of his furs is only the first blow in a mighty battle. When he has made his base on Manikuagan Portage secure, he goes North to Cambrian Lake. If the free-traders stand not with him, they stand against them, and he proposes to wipe them off the district. Plans are drawn and material, tools and men gathered to build a fort to mask Dubawni Post, and it is there, should your father oppose him to the end, that the real battle will be fought."

"He will oppose him to the end," declared Masita grimly. "He will give in to no one, not even—begging your forgiveness, François—the Hudson's Bay Company."

"I know it," admitted François. "For Ivan Trevor has told me something of Briand Dubawni, and I can read a man at first sight. I know he will fight to the end, and the knowledge saddens me, Masita. For the Hudson's Bay must take a hand in the struggle. Helbaud moves not against the free-traders alone but against Ivan Trevor. We must protect ourselves, our trade and our company, and the moment the logs of his fort go up on the Kaniapiskau, the logs of a fort of ours go up too."

"*Mon Dieu!*" lamented Masita. "It is sad. It is horrible, François, to war against your heart. I hope it will not come to that. For I am as you. I can not change my allegiance, and as you say one stands with one's company to the death."

"I can not see but that it will come to bitterness and bloodshed in the end," returned Lavergne gloomily. "But the present is of the most concern. Your father will not give in. We know that for a truth. And this Helbaud, there is no telling what he may do. He may torture your father, or insult you.

"You can not take the risk, and that is why I gave you the sign. Ivan Trevor is near at hand, at the mouth of Ishimanikuagan Lake. His camp lies not far from the camp of the Ishimanikuagan Indians, although they, being in Helbaud's pay, do not for good reasons know it. He has come across from Seven Islands Post by the Gabriel River, and he has with him Seven Islands, Moisie, Mingan and Romaine men."

"And," burst out Masita, "they will attack——"

"No, they are not strong enough for attack. Helbaud has mustered more force than even Ivan Trevor gave him credit for being able to summon. Besides, Helbaud is yet within Quebec territory, within his rights, and the Factor makes no lawless raids. He will follow him over the Height of Land, and there on the Kaniapiskau, where Helbaud thinks to sway the Labrador, the day of reckoning will come."

"But Helbaud himself had no regard for the law," declared Masita, her anger rising at remembrance of the outrage. "He seized us on a traveled highway."

"Yes, but he will not hold you long," comforted Lavergne. "Go back swiftly now and tell your father. Tell him to be ready. When the second relay of packers goes into eat and Betarde is at the other end of the beach, you will hear the whistle of the curlew. As soon as you hear it, dash out of the door. Let your father smite down any one who happens to be in the way. I shall be standing with the canoe afloat, and in another second we shall be off."

"But Betarde, and the other paddlers!" exclaimed Masita. "They will give chase. And you, François! You will be unmasked. *Mon Dieu!* I tremble to think what they would do to you if they caught us."

"They will not catch us," vowed Lavergne grimly. "There will be three paddles. Your father is a strong man, and I—by Heaven! I will burst blade, body and craft before they catch us. We can make the Factor's camp before them. Quick, Masita. Stroll back to the council-hall just as you came. I see some of the first relay of packers coming out."

CHAPTER IX

A RACE FOR A PRIEST

MASITA turned from the beach, but she had hardly taken a step towards the council-hall when the voice of Helbaud rang out above the brawling of the river.

"François!" it called. "François Lavergne!"

And both Masita and Lavergne looked up with a start to see the Arctic Fur leader in the messroom doorway, a smoking cigar in his hand and the flush of wine on his cheeks.

"François!" he called again. "Do you hear? But perhaps the river rapids have deafened you or the sight of the girl has put you in a trance? Eh? Hello! François!"

Masita had frozen in her tracks like some wild animal or bird discovered at close quarters, and Lavergne, on a lower level near the waterline, moved aside to take the range of Helbaud's eye.

"I hear," he answered, "though the brawl of the white-water is somewhat loud. You want me?"

"You know the Indian camp near the mouth of Ishimanikuagan Lake?"

Masita gave an almost inaudible gasp.

François's figure stiffened.

"Yes, I know it well," he answered firmly. though there was a riot in his heart.

"Go there. At once, this minute. There is a priest there, Father Boccairre, ministering among them. He knows me well. Tell him I want him instantly, and see that you linger not on the way. And you, Betarde, bring the girl back from the river. See that she gets no chance to escape."

Helbaud with a flourish of his cigar was gone while he spoke, gone back to the wine and the revelry, to the sensuous contemplation of whatever design was forming in his aborted mind, and for one hesitating second Lavergne and Masita fathomed each other's eyes.

"*Mon Dieu*, François!" she faltered. "What does he want with a—a priest?"

"I can guess," murmured Lavergne harshly. "For what does a priest do but bury or marry or—both? And by Heaven! He shall have a priest. He shall have several priests such as he never dreamed of. Keep a good heart and let your father hear what I have told you. Go back quickly. I must be afloat before the hound changes his mind or arises in his wrath at my tardiness and sends some one else. For that would never do. I go to Ivan Trevor. Keep a good heart, Masita, and listen for the whistle of the curlew. That shall be the sign. Helbaud will make no move till I return, so, again I say it, keep a good heart!"

Lavergne had picked up and launched an eighteen-foot canoe while he spoke, and, laying his paddle across the gunwales, he was away with the shove of a moccasined toe. Even as Masita crossed from the beach to her father in the council-hall, the current, flowing deep and strong after its plunge over the rapids above, whirled Lavergne around the bend below the flat rock-beach.

And around that bend, had Helbaud been there to see, the Arctic Fur leader would have marveled at the haste that spurred the man. Lavergne ripped away the flannel shirt that impeded the movements of his shoulders, and bare to the waist, he drove the paddle with tremendous drives.

AWAY westward the spruce-crowned ridges curved into the flat of a beaver meadow, and the sun, poised on the horizon in the open gap, poured forth across the meadow a flood of carmine light. It painted the rocky shores, bathed the turbulent river and enveloped man and craft in a bloody cloud. Upon Lavergne's heated face its last feeble rays struck like upspringing flame, for he was writhing in an orgasm of effort and forcing the canoe in long, violent leaps like a horse under the merciless spur.

Many a canoe-race he had run in the North with danger as his running-mate. Many a time he had sped with urgent post-messages, with succor in time of accident, with food in time of famine, but never had he hastened as he hastened now. Continually he urged his muscles to quicker action, and continually he cursed the lawless, licentious Helbaud.

He feared a change of mind on the part of the Arctic Fur leader, for he was notorious for his vacillation and eccentricities. Time might drag on his hands, and Briand Dubawni and Masita be put to the test of his greed and lust before François's return.

Therefore Lavergne shot down the Manikuagan with all the velocity that the combined force of body and stream could impart.

About him water, shore and sunset sky blended in a radiant panorama, all one vast splash of crimson, and then, quite suddenly, as the sun dropped without warning into the depths of the marshy beaver meadow, the strange, violent colors of the North began to creep in.

For a moment the afterglow lay a rose-smeared palette, but the next instant a medley of hues began to mix in a chaotic dream of some fairy-painter's mind. Amber, umber, mauve, magenta, amethyst, saffron and ocher in a hundred different blendings stole through and through the rose-smeared sky, deepening minute by minute to the buffs and purples of advancing night.

And in the descending shadows the living things of the forest began to advertise their presence. Overhead rasped the swift-darting night-hawk. On either hand, perched somberly against the last faint sunset gleam, the horned owls hooted from the blasted trees. From the surface of the river arose the bull-throated booming of the frogs, punctuated by the incessant complaint of the swarming, overgrown, Northern mosquitoes.

A great new world had awakened about François, a strange night-world with its denizens going forth upon their business of existence, their quests, their companionships, their loves and their hates, but the glamour and fascination of that night-world struck but vaguely upon his consciousness. Speed! Speed! That was his inward cry, and the startled, wing-roaring wild fowl launching skyward ahead of him, the terrified moose floundering shorewards from the lily beds, the stunned river trout leaping for the night-fly and smitten in mid-leap by his boring craft, drifted away and behind him as some swift-passing dream.

On and on he whizzed, the sweat dripping from him, his breath coming hard, the muscles of his arms, shoulders and back ridging, knotting, bunching, rippling smoothly again, tensing and disappearing like the writhing of snakes under his skin. On and on he labored, taking rapids and chutes on the run, plunging phantom-like around the bends, driving like a wild duck down the long straight-water reaches.

He sped on a mission, countenancing no obstacle, taking no thought of himself, for before his grim-set eyes was the vision of Masita, frozen in her tracks on the Manikuagan beach and demanding to know what a priest was for. He gritted his teeth at the remembrance as he whirled through the last mile of straight-water paddling and came to where the river widened before gushing through the neck of Ishimanikuagan Lake.

Here he did not keep on the strong current but slanted through the shore-eddies, boiling black in the gloom beneath the overhang of the bank, and edged in to the rock-bristling shore-line whereon clung the tenacious roots of the tamaracks.

The stars were out, but the trees leaned dark as a thirty-foot wall above the water, and in their shadow Lavergne looked for the signs of the secret landing-place. It was not easy to locate. Sometimes he felt cautiously with his paddle among the arching roots, sometimes as his canoe lightly scraped the rock-wall he put out tentative fingers to assure himself of his surroundings. But at last with a grunt of satisfaction he ducked under an arch-like tamarack root and slid into a horseshoe-shaped cove.

And instantly, as he lay to, the thin call of a curlew came out of the tamarack cover on the shore.

Drawing a deep breath, François whistled in answer.

"Chakoni," he called, "is that you?"

The tamarack cover swayed, a tawny figure moved in the obscurity, and Lavergne knew it for the tall, supple figure of the Nascaupee Indian who was Ivan Trevor's head fort-runner.

"Chakoni," he demanded, "is he here? The Factor, is he here?"

"Even so," spoke Chakoni, cautiously lowering his natural high-pitched tone of voice. "He smokes by the smudge fire with Sachelle, the chief trader, the Seven Islands, Moisie, Mingan and Romaine men."

"Good!" exulted Lavergne, with a sigh of relief. "I was half afraid he might be off on some scouting expedition. I must get to him in a hurry."

"Why?" asked Chakoni unemotionally. "I see that you have come as the wild duck wings from the camp of the Arctic Fur. But why? Did the Montagnais bastard begin to suspect his head voyageur?"

"Come on to the camp and you'll hear," responded Lavergne, jumping ashore. "Lift the canoe and follow after me."

With a deft flip the Nascaupee lifted the canoe from the water to the bank and darted after François who was plunging through the green brush.

The way wound up over the tamarack ridge in a secret portage or cut-off to the western shore of Ishimanikuagan and coming out near its junction with the tortuous river itself. They crossed the shore ridge, ferretted through a tangled slash, bridged a mossy, bouldered chasm on a fallen pine and debouched upon the bed of ground-hemlock that sloped like the dark-green of grass to Ishimanikuagan, and all but screened by the branches of the hemlock Lavergne caught the gleam of the Hudson's Bay fire.

CHAPTER X

'ROUND THE COUNCIL-FIRE

AT THE swish of running moccasins in the ground-hemlock, the Chimo Factor and the others raised themselves upon their elbows beside the smoldering mosquito smudge around which they were ringed.

" 'Fore Heffen, François!" exclaimed the Factor, lowering the monstrous long-stemmed pipe with which he was valiantly routing the winged pests. "What has happened?"

"Helbaud has closed the Manikuagan against all travelers," Lavergne burst out, "and seized the free-trader, Dubawni, and his daughter. He wants Dubawni in his company and the daughter in his house."

"The teffle!" ejaculated the Factor.

"But Dubawni won't merge with Helbaud's company, and Masita won't so much as eat in his house. But Helbaud swears they both shall be in his company by night.

He gives the free-trader time to consider ——"

"And the girl, man, the girl?" broke in Ivan, puffing violently upon his pipe.

"Just as I was planning escape with her, Helbaud came out and sent me off for a priest."

"A priest? To one of the Indian camps, eh?"

"Yes, the Montagnais camp up the shore. He told me to bring the priest from there."

"Father Boccairre!" put in Sachelle the chief trader, nodding briefly over his short black pipe. "I'm know heem, me."

"And he dares?" boomed Ivan. "By Heffen! It is time I was taking this tefflish upstart by his slippery neck. When a Northman goes out to war on women, things will be coming to a strange pass. But losh, Helbaud is no Northman, either. I will be asking your pardon, men—" with a sweep of his pipe-stem 'round the fire—"for classing him with you. He will make no move, François, till you get back, eh?"

"I think not," brooded Lavergne, "but still I am afraid."

"How many men has the ronion?"

"I hardly know. His river fleets run large, and there have been more men coming down from the North as well."

"How many will he be having altogether, François, are you thinking?"

"Perhaps half a thousand. I am not sure. It is hard to keep track with the shifting of the packers and the Montrealers who bring up the trade goods. But I would count as many as fifteen brigades against us if he drew on his whole force."

"By the beard of Torngak, but the man is strong!" mused the Factor, caressing his pipe. "I see stern work ahead to go into such a stronghold and take out Dubawni and the girl. But his trade, François, how runs his trade in fur?"

"Large," answered Lavergne, "very large. I counted in his warehouses and under his sheds and tents two thousand, five hundred ninety-pound packs. Their value will touch two million dollars, and that without counting Dubawni's cargo from Dubawni Post."

"Heffen preserve's! I can not be letting this robbery go on any longer. I am always loath to come to violence, but this man invites nothing else. Two millions, you say? I'll warrant he has scoured the North and reached the Hudson's Bay shore. The stakes are big, and the game will be big as well. I am telling you, François, and Sachelle, and all the rest that this man will not be quenched in a day or a night.

"You have campaigned with me against many a treacherous whelp of a fur upstart, but the campaigns we have undertaken are but pleasure jaunts to what this affair will be. Strife in its essence, you will be understanding! That is what the antagonism must be. If the Arctic Fur wins the Kaniapiskau, I may as well close the doors of Chimo and take ship back to far Glenelg.

"But my imagination will be running away with me. We are not concerning ourselves with the ultimate blow just yet. We are concerning ourselves with Dubawni and his daughter. An enemy, you will be remembering, men, and a man who has thrown my advances back in my face. By Helbaud's code I would sit where I am and let the third party work its will. If the Arctic Fur smashes Dubawni, the Hudson's Bay does not have to do it? Yon's cynical logic, eh?"

"*Oui*," spat Sachelle, "if she's come down to de fine t'ing, I'm guess dat be de strategy of de war. But ba gar! She ain't be your code, Factor; she ain't be ma code; she ain't be de code of any man here. I'm know, me. We be of de Hudson's Bay, de *honorable* company, an' 'spose we goin' knock *diable* out dis man Dubawni tomorrow mornin', we be bound by de w'ite man's code to rescue heem tonight."

"Man," smiled the Factor, "you will be speaking after my own heart. And forbye, I am taking it, you are echoing the sentiments of every one around the fire. But how do we go about it? That is the point. This is the council-fire, men, and I will be asking your advice. For, mark you, who goes to Manikuagan Portage tonight takes a risk, and I will not be forcing you into any risk under any stubborn mandate. I may have my views as to the best move to make, but I will be considering your views as well. This is the council-fire, I am saying, and any may speak with an open voice."

THE Seven Islands, the Moisie, the Mingan and the Romaine men looked at one another through the smoke of their pipes, and with common consent their eyes centered upon Sachelle for he was their spokesman in most things, and with his peculiar gift of shrewd judgment and statement he was generally entrusted with the responsibility of voicing their mental processes.

"Me," suggested Sachelle, acknowledging the cue by an explosive suck of his pipe, "I'm t'ink dere ain't be anyt'ing to do but make de false attack from de forest side. Den wan party on de water might be dash in and secure Dubawni and hees daughter."

"I'm afraid they are too strong for that," brooded Lavergne, "and they would by no means leave the waterfront unguarded. I'm afraid it won't do, Sachelle. I told her—Masita—to listen for the call of the curlew. If we could get up to the rock-beach unnoticed and the call was given, the thing might be managed as I planned at first before that cursed Helbaud stuck his evil face through the doorway."

"Aye, if unnoticed, François," nodded Ivan Trevor. "But with so much at stake, Helbaud is not the man to be careless of his approaches. Unless, forbye, he is so drunk as to forget all danger."

"He will not be that drunk," declared Lavergne. "I have seen much of the man, and though he carouses deep, he seems to keep his wits. He will have sentinels out as usual, both on the portage and the beach. And the one on the beach will be strictly warned to bring word of my coming with the priest."

"Even so," put in the thin, high-pitched, unemotional voice of the Nascaupee fort-runner Chakoni, "you speak the truth. He will be on the lookout for your coming with the priest. And if there is any wisdom 'round the council-fire, he will not be disappointed in his watch."

"Eh, man?" demanded the Factor, alert on the instant at the incisive tone, a tone he knew that accompanied Chakoni's exposition of ruse and strategy and counsel. "What is it you are expounding? You will be explaining yourself?"

The Nascaupee pocketed the thin pipe of stone he had been drawing on and stood up as if the plan of action were already decided.

"Hilbaud looks for a priest," he observed, gazing calmly into the Factor's eyes. "Why should the Montagnais dog be disappointed? At Chimo, when stress lay on my people and sickness and famine and death went stalking through their ranks, I have seen you make as good a priest as ever set foot in the land. And tonight you have what this Father Boccairre of the Ishimanikuagan camp lacks—the kick of the rearing caribou in your ministering hand!"

CHAPTER XI

THE TAKING OF THE CASSOCK

"FAIR grand!" exclaimed Ivan, springing up from the fire. "Fair grand, Chakoni!" He laid hands on the Nascaupee fort-runner's shoulders and stared at him in admiration. "Man, man, when my wits work slow, you neffer fail me. You have an eloquence that distills as the evening dew and a logic that sieves the bottom of the soundest argument."

Not a muscle of the stoic Nascaupee's face moved, but the surface lights of his eyes glowed brighter with a something that might have been tenderness.

"Factor, we have been blood-brothers through many a troubled moon," he returned, "and the moons of our lives are yet young. Blood-brothers we shall be to the end, and my hand shall be with yours when you war. And I would that tonight when you put the vows to Hilbaud I might stand at your shoulder, but although I can not I will be close in the dark while you and François work the trick."

"Aye, that you will," nodded the Factor. "You all will be close in the dark. So get ready, men, and whisk the camp clean of canoes, dunnage and all. We will not be coming back here. That one thing is plain. There will be no safety for us south of Manikuagan depot after we slap Helbaud's cheek. It will be Northward as fast as the paddle will drive. If we succeed as we hope to, we must point for the Height of Land."

"*Mon Dieu*," demurred the chief trader Sachelle, "I'm ain't t'ink, even wit' de good luck, dat we be able to get over to portage."

"Tush, man, nor will we be trying," snorted Ivan. "Do not be misinterpreting me. We will not be coming back here because there will be no time to stop. But we will be coming *past* here, on the run, forbye, and with the tefflish Arctic Fur whelps on our heels if they have the heart to push the chase in the dark.

"We will whirl out of the river into Ishimanikuagan Lake, you are understanding, and take the lake for it. It curves northward and westward, mark you, like a walrus' tusk, and its northern end is not so many miles from the Upper Manikuagan River. Thus we shall miss the Mushalagan gateway which this teffle of a Helbaud holds. And though he may head us before we touch the Height of Land, we will have performed the strategic stroke of dividing his force. He can not leave his base unguarded, and he will be compelled to leave men to man his river fleets to keep his lines of communication open. Yon's logic, eh, Sachelle?"

The chief trader nodded energetically and put his pipe away.

"*Oui*," he admitted, "dat's wan better plan dan tryin' to beat our way over de portage. Ba gar, dat ain't no easy trick to do. But on de water we got de fair show."

"Aye, and though we shall still be outnumbered badly, it will not be what one might be calling overwhelmning superiority, you mind. And win or lose, we will be giving Hillaire Helbaud and his Arctic Fur whelps a busy night of it. A raid on Manikuagan Portage, men, and a quick retreat! Are you all willing?"

"We are!" they boomed.

"Then be cleaning the camp as I say. And you, Sachelle and François, be spurring them while they work. I, myself, must improvise a cassock for my masquerade."

Immediately the Seven Islands, Moisie, Mingan and Romaine men sprang to the work, striking the canvas flys stretched to windward of the fire, roping their dunnage and supplies into compact bundles for stowing between the canoe-thwarts and bringing forth the canoes themselves from the cedar-screened cache of green branches where they were concealed.

The Factor unearthed his own gear-bag and from it took an adikey, a hooded cloth coat of Eskimo origin and lighter than the Winter skin *koolutuk*, which he had been wearing in the Spring. It was shaped much like a parka or a priest's cassock, and he proceeded carefully to rip out the drill lining which he had put in it to more effectively stop the wind and Labrador rains.

When he had finished he held in his hands the costume of his masquerade, and quickly he arrayed himself in it, pulled the hood over his head and drew in the sagging skirt with a twist of twine about his waist.

"Will I pass for Boccairre, are you thinking?" he demanded of his men.

They stared at his mighty figure, fully as tall as the tall Lavergne's and bulking much broader and thicker, bulking almost mountainous in the loose folds of the adikey.

"Ba gar!" chuckled the chief trader in admiration. "I'm never see such a priest on de country. You be big as t'ree priests, but in de night an' in hees drunkenness I'm don't 'spose Hillaire Helbaud be notice. An' den, as Chakoni be say, you mebbe need all your size w'en you be go to put de vows. An', *diable*, we be forget wan t'ing! You got de book for it?".

The Factor drew from his pocket his mooseskin-bound Bible, the well-thumbed volume that along with his monstrous pipe accompanied him wherever he journeyed, the book which, not to speak of other things, contained his beloved Solomon's proverbs, underscored in red ink by his cumbersome hand.

"I am not thinking," he observed, "that it contains the exact words that Helbaud needs in his essay, but I am thinking it contains much else that he needs. The word of the Lord is mighty, and he who bears it with no forward heart goes not in vain. Therefore, men, we can be hoping that our righteous cause will prosper, and the hand of Providence will be with us on Manikuagan Portage. Helbaud fancies himself lord of the North, but there are lords and overlords, and he has yet to meet his overlord. So load up in a crack and set out."

Like huge turtles bearing their misshapen shells the Hudson's Bay men, with their supplies, dunnage and fur canoes poised upon their heads, bobbed off across the cut-off to the Manikuagan's waters. In single file they ascended the ground-hemlock covered slope, crossed the mossy, bouldered chasm, threaded over the tamarack ridge and descended through the thick shrubbery to the shore-line at the horseshoe-shaped cove.

"Listen!" commanded the Factor, as they reached the margin.

They all stood immobile for a second, ears trained riverwards for the sound of the paddle of some chance traveler, but no such sound came.

"Fair grand!" whispered Ivan. "Not even a Montagnais abroad. Swift with the embarking. François, we will be towing your small canoe behind the large ones till it is time to transfer. Carefully, men, and never a rock-scrape or paddle-thump for the lives of you!"

AS SILENT as phantoms they drifted out from the secret landing place, wriggled under the arching tamarack root and pointed bows up-river, six long canoes each manned by a dozen paddles, with Lavergne's eighteen-footer towing empty behind.

They went in single file upon the water as well as upon the land, so that the leading canoe might break the current's force for the others. In the bow of the first canoe sat Chakoni, long-bodied, straight-backed, lithe-limbed, rigid-elbowed, plying his blade as his ancestors unto remote generations had plied theirs. He knew the Northern waters as he knew the loom of Chimo, and in eddy, chute or boulder-studded passage he was never at fault. Sunlight or starlight, it was all the same to him, and when he could not see in the dark where the narrow, balsam-shrouded shores leaned in, he seemed to sense his way by some primitive instinct.

Behind Chakoni sat the Factor, and François, the latter even after his race wielding paddle with the best of them, breathing the canoe-man's deep breaths and trying to keep his heart from hammering in the excitement and suspense, and ranged in pairs behind them again were two of the Seven Islands men, two of the Moisie, two of the Mingan and two of the Romaine men, all picked paddlers, paddlers to set the terrific pace for the hinder ones to keep. While in the steersman's place huddled the thick-set, black-bearded Sachelle, twisting the stern of the great craft this way or that with the magic of a somber demon and glinting his white teeth through his dark beard every time he dipped his blade.

And at a terrific pace they bored upstream, their speed impressive, incontestable by dint of the very harmonious unity of the flashing paddles. Their skill seemed to upset the natural law of resistance, and rather than the rushing current impeding them, they with blades strangely slanted in its depths, took advantage of its force to make their canoes glide up as of themselves. The identical impetus with which the snarling Manikuagan hurled itself against them, glanced them, as it were, from its foaming breast upon their upward way.

Above them the sky domed like dark-blue velvet, strewn with the infinite stars, but the starlight fell very weak, as if the planets had drawn aloof from the earth into a nebulous mist. Brighter than the star-gleam glared the Summer lightning, puffing skyward at intervals like exploding magnesium over Mushalagan Lake to the northwards.

The wilderness night droned in its many voices all about them, and again Lavergne heard the flapping wild ducks, the splashing moose, the hoot of owl, cry of night-hawk, flop of fish, boom of frogs and, like an evil symphony stringing through it all, the blood-whine of the mosquitoes.

Upward, ever upward they drove, maintaining their speed with an ease and certitude well-nigh uncanny, the double rows of paddles working with unfailing precision, like the arms of some smooth-oiled machine. But a half-mile below the bend of the river which curved into the flat rock-beach of Manikuagan Portage, the Factor gave Chakoni the word to slow.

"Here is where we can be flushing no wild-fowl flock and stampeding no crazy moose," he whispered. "Quiet and canny and secret is the way we go. If you hear drinking game, lay to in a crack."

As silent as floating Autumn leaves go down a stream, the Factor's brigade forged up. Close in to the bank they hung till they reached the bend around which Lavergne plunged from Masita's view in his mad dash down-stream, and here, without disturbance of any game, they held their canoes motionless in the slow tug of the shore-eddy circling in the lee of the headland.

"Pass up Lavergne's canoe," ordered Ivan in a low voice. "And you, Chakoni, hold a blanket between the gunwales for fear the eddy smites them too hard as we embark."

Up from the rear came the eighteen-foot craft, passed from hand to hand of the crews and riding lightly as a cork in its emptiness, till it was alongside the big leading fur-craft.

The Nascaupee fort-runner leaned out and passed a fold of blanket between the two crafts for a buffer and steadied the smaller canoe with a hand upon the forward deck.

"Are you ready, François?" asked the Factor. "Can you keep your feelings and nerves under control?"

"Yes," nodded Lavergne grimly. "I can keep feelings, nerves, wits and all things under control. Whatever you order, I'll do. And I don't think you'll find any of your moves spoiled by my rashness."

"Fair grand!" exclaimed Ivan. "For you will be needing a cool head and a quick hand, I am thinking. And I am praying that I may be able to carry myself likewise. It is my bent to flare and bore through things by main strength. But subtler craft will win this night. You are armed like me? You have your knife and your belt-ax? Good! Give me your rifle. I hope it will not come to using any of them, but one can neffer be telling."

The Factor slipped Lavergne's rifle and his own into the bottom of the eighteen-footer, and steadied François as the latter stepped out of the fur canoe into the smaller one, taking care first to place his foot squarely amidships and then gliding forward into the bowsman's place.

Ivan looked over his crews, as if he could see them all in the dark.

"You will follow in a few minutes," he directed. "When we are ashore, draw in as close as you may without being seen. Sachelle is in command while I with a clear conscience take the cassock and uphold the right."

The Factor stepped into the steersman's seat of the small canoe.

Paddling as those who need to observe no secrecy, he and François rounded the bend, and as they passed on above, the water-borne clamor of wild carousing reverberated in their ears.

CHAPTER XII

THE WASSAILERS

AND ASHORE that same wild clamor of carousing reverberated in other and more anxious ears. Within the darkened council-hall Dubawni and Masita listened to it minute by minute with increasing foreboding.

They were not afraid, in the physical sense of fear, and their spirits still burned defiant, but of the probable results of the reckless wassailing they were poignantly aware.

Moreover they could see as well as hear, for the door between the council-room and the messroom was still half open. And there at the head table which ran crosswise in the big room Helbaud and his associates made merry as befitted lords of the fur trade.

The spotless table was no longer spotless, the porcelain and silver in faultless array. The snow-white cloth was crimsoned with spilled wine and blackened with fallen cigar ashes. The great bank of wild flowers in the middle of the table was dismantled and robbed, its blossoms littering the board, lying on the floor or decorating the buttonholes of the drunken feasters.

And Helbaud at the head, sleek-haired, powder-faced, wax-mustached, bold-eyed, urged them continually to louder roistering and demanded to know of any existing reason why they should not drink deep and celebrate this night of nights. For had they not performed a good stroke this night and won for their company certain thousands of dollars' worth of furs?

And not that alone, he pointed out with his maudlin finger. They had captured the free-trade traffic in the hinterland, secured its strongest and most strategic post and retained in their service the shrewdest and most influential of the free-trade post-keepers in the person of Chateaubriand Dubawni.

For there was no doubt that Dubawni would join them. Pooh! Helbaud ridiculed the idea of resistance. Dubawni but made a bluff, as any man would do, to save his face and his dignity, and these once saved, he would compromise like the keen business head he was.

Also, he was not the only one who would join them. There was another. That was why he wanted Father Boccairre. In the old days men of his stamp and state would not have bothered with such a small matter as a priest, but he, he—with a leering face that belied every word he spoke—was a stickler for the proprieties. Besides, it was not the way of the French, the pure-born French, and he had come of one of the best families in Flanders, and, *mon Dieu*, why should the little cat scorn him and his company? Was it not a mighty company and he its ruling head? He began to dilate unendingly upon himself and his company from the day of the company's inception.

And off in the darkened council-hall with its half-open door, Masita and her father heard with swelling indignation, aversion, hate and disgust Helbaud's rhapsody upon the corporation of the Arctic Fur.

Yet although his rhapsody was a rhapsody in its essence, wild, unconnected, bombastic, verging on impudence, there was the essence of grim truth underlying all his statements. For he had strongly established his intention of taking possession of the Valley of the Kaniapiskau, and that meant all the hinterland, and he likewise threatened to sweep the free-traders—ever a thorn in Ivan Trevor's side—off the district or absorb them into his own concern.

It was the critical stage. Helbaud had fixed his eye on Dubawni Post, the strongest free-trading post in the North, a post which Ivan Trevor had tolerated because he thought to buy it in the end without resort to force.

If Helbaud enticed Dubawni, or coerced him into the Arctic Fur Company, he increased his strength one hundredfold, for it was plain that the eye of every free-trader in the North was fixed upon the independent Frenchman. They awaited his word and his move, for he was a power among them, and their trade lived or died with him. Did he submit quietly to the overbearing Helbaud, they would swallow the bitter medicine and follow. But did he resist, they were ready to flock to his aid and strike with him.

Thus a double danger confronted Ivan Trevor and compelled him to take swift action.

Although Helbaud congratulated himself on the secrecy of his projects, the eye of the Chimo Factor was on him. By the use of spies he had kept in touch with Helbaud's gradual advance northward over the Height of Land into the country he claimed for his company, and in the Spring he found it necessary to come south to get an accurate estimate of the Arctic Fur's true strength, their Montreal trade, their Manikuagan base and also to personally muster the men of the Hudson's Bay Posts on the St. Lawrence Gulf to his aid. The men of his Northern posts were concentrated at Chimo, and with these, reinforced by the forces from the south, he planned to come to grips with Helbaud across the Height of Land.

AND Helbaud, knowing nothing of Ivan Trevor's vigilance, activity and proximity, wassailed in dreams as well as in wine and foretold to his associates how before six months the Arctic Fur Company would rule the Northland.

"For see," Masita and Dubawni heard him declaim, as he pounded the table with the bottom of his glass, "the trade this year runs to two millions all told. Next year with the traffic of the free-traders it will be four, and the year after that, with the trade of the Hudson's Bay Company it will be ten.

"And after that—after that—" Helbaud embraced the company about the disorderly board with the smile of an overlord and the eye of a seer—"there is no telling what it will be. The Hudson's Bay farms at a waste. Their methods are old and obj—obt—what the devil is that word? Ah, obsolete! Obsolete, *messieurs*, obsolete as perdition! I, I will show my company partners where a hundred millions in furs and fish and whales and ivory can be harvested from a barren land."

Uproariously his comrades applauded the prophecy and declared that the estimate was small. The Hudson's Bay? *Mon Dieu*, they gave figures for their year's profit, but was the half ever disclosed? They importuned Helbaud to give his opinion as to the half ever being disclosed, and he pondered gravely a second or two and addressed them with a knowing shake of his sleek-haired head.

"I was once at the George River Post, when the Hudson's Bay Company's ship failed to get through the straits on account of the ice-pack. The posts on Ungava Bay had to go without supplies that year, and the London markets went without the furs. The bales of furs were held over till another year. But do you think the value of them was included in that year's estimate? No. Nor in the estimates of the last. Those furs were of no year, and their value was not disclosed.

"That ice-pack affected all the Labrador posts, and I ask you, how often do things like that occur? Every year. Somewhere, every year, and, as you say, the half of the profit has never been told. There is that undisclosed profit to add to the one hundred millions, and who knows but when I have my hands upon it all I shall control two hundred millions of trade, or three, or four, or maybe half a billion. Think of it, *messieurs*, and, *messieurs*—drink to it. I propose the toast. To the passing of the free-traders and the ancient and honorable Company of Adventurers!"

With gusto they drank the toast, while Dubawni in the council-room ground his impotent teeth and clenched his huge brown hands.

To the passing of the free-traders and the ancient and honorable Company of Adventurers!

Wassailers all, they drank it in wine and dream, but for all its extravagance and windy bravado there was real menace in the sound, and the hammering of the heels of the tumblers upon the board seemed to Dubawni in his helplessness like the knell of his independence.

"And now," Helbaud's domineering voice rang out above the tumult, "we will take the first step towards its realization. Our supper has run long and Dubawni will have had time to consider well. Also, it is nearly time that Father Boccairre was here if my head voyageur François did not linger by the way. Let us go forth, *messieurs*, and you shall see me bend them both to my will."

A scraping and overturning of chairs arose as all the members of the company got upon their unsteady feet, and at the sound Masita seized her father's arm.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she breathed. "Let us not face them here, father. Shut in, we could take no advantage of any turn of fortune. Let us face them on the beach where there is room to run. For I am like a wild thing. I have a fear of walls. In the open they may do their worst, and I shall not cringe. And then, there is François. He will not fail me in coming."

"But much good he will do by coming if Ivan Trevor is not strong enough to attack," growled her father, as she drew him across the floor.

"Still he will come, and the Factor's men will be with him. Keep a good heart, he told me, father, and shall I distrust where he had faith so stern? We *must* have faith and listen for the curlew's call!"

CHAPTER XIII

NO LAW PAST QUEBEC

THE beach outside was a bedlam of noise, for whereas Helbaud and his associates had indulged in a dimensioned carouse in the mess-room, here in the open his hirelings had flung forth in an unlicensed debauch. Walls could not contain their numbers, their clamor nor their frolics, so they had built a monster fire in the center of the flat rock-beach and about it they rioted in Saturnalian din.

Beside the fire stood many rum barrels, flowing without halt, and when their cups ran too full the debauchees slopped them over the fire till the flames reached to the tree-tops. The gray limestone of the beach shone bloody-red under the glare, and a crimson half-moon of fire lay upon the black river water where Betarde, still keeping his vigil, paced unsteadily along.

All about in the ruddy glow which fell like the crimson aurora on Northern snows sprawled, huddled, crouched, sat, ran and danced the most motley horde ever gathered together upon a Northern river, a full half thousand frontiersmen, the scum of the woods, seas and cities. Heterogeneously mingled, yelling, singing, laughing, quarreling, rolling in brawls with the glint of a knife or the flash of an uplifted paddle above them, buffeting each other in a travesty of the art of self-defense upon their wobbly knees, they cumbered the shore, the rakings of the Gulf ports, the off-scourings of the seas, Iroquois Indians, Montagnais Indians, hard-bitten wreckers of Anticosti and Sable Island, outlawed sealers and fishermen from far Newfoundland, St. Pierre and Miquelon.

Helbaud had recruited whatever was at hand, and as he and his comrades passed from the mess-room into the council-room, peering about for Dubawni and his daughter, the full babel of their reveling set him to chuckling maliciously. Rolled in a maudlin chorus came the words of their drinking song:

To the Pole we go, to the Arctic floe,
  And it's naught we care or reck;
For it's there we'd be where the rum flows free,
  And there's no law past Quebec!"

Ho, our enemies we will stamp like fleas,
  And their gear our posts will deck;
For it's knife and ball and an ax-stormed wall;
  And there's no law past Quebec!

"Hear, *messieurs?*" demanded Helbaud, staying his comrades just outside the door. "Hear that song? They are right. When I let them loose, there is no law past Quebec. I wonder if Dubawni and the girl understand?"

Masita and her father had moved away from the hall as Helbaud came out, and now he followed them swiftly into the glare of the fire.

"Nice little puppies, aren't they?" he greeted. "And their bite is worse than their bark. If you are a wise man, Chateaubriand Dubawni, you will give an agreeable answer to the question I put to you not so long ago. I gave you till dark to make up your mind. Well, it is dark and you shall answer. Chateaubriand Dubawni, I think you will consider!"

Helbaud squinted triumphantly into the grim, brown, fire-limned face of the free-trader and into Masita's contemptuous eyes.

"I'll see you in perdition first!" roared the free-trader, shaking his fist venomously in the squinting face. "Is that plain? You think you and your drunken dogs can cow me, but I don't happen to be of timid fiber. You talked of bluff in the mess-room there, but you're the one who's bluffing. You've staged this whole cursed revel to scare me, but I'm not scared. You understand?"

"You won't come into the Arctic Fur Company?"

"Not in a million years. And don't lay a finger on me or my daughter. I'll kill you with my bare hands if you do!"

"And, *par Dieu*, you'll come through half a thousand of my men to do it, will you?" demanded Helbaud coolly. "Curse you! But wait! I forget my diplomacy. Your bruskness makes me forget it. Still I gain nothing by losing my temper. I have an alternative proposition. There's diplomacy again, you will note! I expected stubborn opposition, and I am prepared."

Dubawni glared at him suspiciously while he extracted a paper from his pocket, a long, slim paper in the form of a document. With ostentation he unfolded it and held it in his hand.

"Perhaps you misunderstand our intentions," he ventured. "I remember now that you said something about your status. But be assured that you will not lower your dignity in merging with the Arctic Fur. In selling to us, by this proposition, you will in no degree lose your personality or influence. In fact, I will betray a secret of our company and tell you that we are at the present moment short of good organizers and post-keepers, men who have a grip on the trade and know how to maintain it. So here is another proposition wherein we do not mention buy and sell. Read it over."

Dubawni took the paper roughly and stared at it in the light of the huge fire which threw out a radiance that turned the night into day.

And while he read Masita knew by the way the muscles stood out over his jaws that he was not pleased.

Curiously she stood up on the toes of her moccasins and peered over his shoulder.

In fine, bold handwriting, handwriting as polished and as insolent as Helbaud himself, she read:

> For the consideration of one hundred shares and the salary of an officer in the Arctic Fur Company I hereby transfer my post, Dubawni Post, to the Arctic Fur Company, together with its supplies, appliances and the trade and good-will of the district wherever my operations have been carried on, for the period of five years.
>
> And I hereby pledge myself to use the best of my ability to foster and promote trade, as if in my own interests.
>
> Witnessed . . . .   Signed . . . .

"Brief and to the point!" commented Dubawni in a non-committal manner, handing the paper back to Helbaud. "And I'll tell you what to do with it. Take it to perdition with you to light your way!"

"You refuse?" snarled Helbaud, losing the grip on his temper and his diplomacy.

"No, I don't refuse. I have had no further proposition put to me. It is as if I had never seen that paper. Because it is too abominably mean to be remembered."

"Father—father!" cried Masita, her eyes dancing in the flamelight. "It is the way for a man to speak!"

She clasped his arm with both hands and with a caressing little gesture laid her head against his muscled shoulder.

"It is the way to talk. Though you died for it—yes, and though I died for it—I would not have had you answer any other way. Now, dog of a Helbaud, what do you say to that?"

"Say?" gasped Helbaud, his face contorted in impotent rage. "Say?" He seemed to have lost all control of himself under the cool, knifing scorn of Dubawni. "I will say nothing."

"Then, dog of a Helbaud, what will you do?"

"Do? You little cat! I will show you what I will do. Ho, Betarde, Henri, Antoine, Felix—all! Seize this man!"

WITH a celerity that proved they had been forewarned of their possible need, the revelers sprang up from about the fire and with drunken shouts rushed upon Dubawni.

The latter, on the instant that Helbaud opened his mouth, jumped viciously at the Arctic Fur leader, but he never reached him, for Helbaud's half-muddled clerks, guides, post-keepers and interpreters plunged in a body between, and Dubawni was enveloped in a twisted knot of arms and legs that seemed like the many tentacles of a sea-demon holding him.

As fast as he wriggled out of the crook of a leg or arm, as fast as he ripped off one detaining hand or toe, more fastened upon him. He smote to the right, to the left, straight ahead and battered to the rear with his elbows, brought feet, knees and head into play, and it seemed for an instant, so mighty was the squat, broad-shouldered frame of him, that he would break clear.

"*Par Dieu!*" screeched Helbaud. "Can the dozen of you not hold him? Must I——"

The sentence ended in a grunt, for the flying body of Masita smote him full in the chest. Like a lynx she had leaped, and like a lynx she clung, clawing, fighting, tearing Helbaud's face.

"Break loose!" she panted. "*Mon Dieu!* In the name of my mother break loose! I can hold off this one!"

Dubawni responded with a convulsive leap that tore away the detaining hands. In another second he would have won from Helbaud's officers, but as he cleared their outer ranks he met the rush of the hundreds of roisterers who had sprung from the fire.

He went down under a human wave, and he came up stiffly held in scores of hands which bore him as they would have borne a crotched tree-trunk.

"To the water's edge yonder, as I directed you!" Helbaud roared out, struggling to pinion the hands that lacerated his powdered face and ripped his bristling mustache to a scrubby brush. "To the water-line! And you, you little cat, must I squeeze the breath out of you before you quit?"

Struggling fiercely but impotently, Masita felt Helbaud's arms press on hers like sharp-edged hoops. She was half lying, half leaning against his breast, and she could not get room to strike or twist.

"You little cat! Be still and I shall not hurt you. Ha! You give up, eh? Then stand up and do not spring like a wildcat at my face again. What will Father Boccairre say to that? You will have to show gentler ways before him.

"He should be here. I wonder what in perdition keeps that François! But Dubawni! Look! It is thus with all who struggle against me. And you, will you see him swing in air as carrion for the crows? I think not, little spitfire. You must tell him to change his mind. Come down to the water's edge!"

Panting, half sobbing with rage and pain and impotence and despair, Masita could not resist his drawing her by the arm after the motley horde who carried her father like a toy in their hands.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she breathed to herself. "What has happened François?"

She glanced despairingly toward mid-river, but there was only the black, swift-gliding water with the half-moon of bloody firelight lying on it like a stain.

She listened, but riverward there was no sound except the brawling of that same black water, ceaselessly flowing by in the impenetrable shadow beyond the bloody stain.

And landward there was likewise no movement nor sound except in the bare space of the rock-beach. Beyond the rock-beach the forest slept again as it had slept before men came to shatter its nirvanic calm with their greed and lust and brawling and killing. It offered no succor in the disputes or oppressions of men. Inscrutable it remained whether they won or lost, lived or died, and across its azoic silence, profane as a bomb in a cathedral, rang the Arctic Fur men's thunderous refrain:

And there's no law, no law, no law past Quebec!

CHAPTER XIV

THE CALL OF THE CURLEW

UNDER a lone, leaning spruce at the end of the flat rock-beach Dubawni's captors stopped and set the free-trader, still stiffly held, upon his feet.

"The rope!" ordered Helbaud sharply. "Put on the rope!"

Some of the mob dragged forth a coil of heavy rope which had been unostentatiously wound around one of the rum barrels, its strands whipping and rasping hollowly against the empty staves. With fumbling and cursing and awkward passes they knotted a noose in it and dropped the noose over Dubawni's head.

"You, Betarde, climb up the spruce and run the end over a sound limb. Sit astride, since you seem to have the levelest head of them all tonight, and see that it does not bind in a crotch. And see that he does not climb up with his hands. Stamp him on the head if he tries."

Like the half-gorilla he was, Betarde climbed up the leaning trunk and obeyed. Like the original ape, he straddled the limb over which he dropped the loose end of the rope and grinned down upon the primitive horde of cave-men below, men but little removed in dress and tastes and blood-lusting passions from the day of the stone ax and knotty club. The forking firelight licked his peering face, picking it out clearly against the somber background of the shadowy spruce branches, and the hempen rope he adjusted wriggled like a golden snake in mid-air.

"She be all right now," he announced with professional impassiveness.

"Then lay hold, men, all who can find room for their hands," directed Helbaud. "Take up the slack and await my word to hoist."

The golden snake in mid-air smoothed out to a golden rod. The loop lying loosely upon Dubawni's collar-bones drew in snugly against the ridged muscles of his neck.

He could not struggle. He could not raise a hand to tear at the noose. For he was clamped, body, legs, arms and hands by the iron grip of the Arctic Fur hirelings, a grip that would only loosen when their fellows threw their weight upon the taut rope.

Tremors of rage twitched those bare muscles, and he breathed heavily, like a prisoned wild thing or a proud horse girthed against his will. His eyes blazed stubbornly into the wild eyes of those who beset him and into the mocking eyes of Helbaud on the edge of the ring, and they never ceased to blaze till they encountered those of Masita, roughly gripped by one of Helbaud's hands.

They had not yet broken his spirit, but Dubawni saw that they were on the verge of breaking hers. For an instant a great fear swept him, fear for Masita, if by any chance Helbaud carried his bluff through to the grim end. In that second he wavered for her sake, and Masita read his vacillation, and their eyes spoke to each other as plainly as their lips might have done. In hers was uncertainty, tumult, appeal, for the identical fear that swept Dubawni was haunting her.

Was it bluff, they seemed to demand of each other? Was the man lawless, ruthless enough to hang a rival trader in cold blood because he would not bend to his will?

Then into their minds leaped twin visions of the bloody, smoky day of the sack of Opawika Post. Dubawni saw again Helbaud's hirelings storming the walls, and Masita with the childish eyes of that day saw again her mother falling, white and still, to a stray ball because she would not take advantage of the chance to leave the post before the attack.

Masita remembered. Dubawni remembered. Helbaud was the same man still. Were his methods the same?

But with the free-trader the wave of vacillation, of fear for something other than himself, was as brief as a flash of light. He recalled the fact that he stood under the law of Quebec, that this assault upon him on a traveled highway was an abortion and an outrage; and with the recollection came returning poise. He faced the crowd and Helbaud with the old stubbornness, mingled with contemptuous scorn, and the fire of his fighting spirit flushed his browned cheek.

Helbaud mistook the dawning light on his face for a change of mind, of attitude.

"You reconsider?" he exulted, leaning forward upon the shoulders of the ring of men and extending the document of transfer towards Dubawni. "You will sign—when your hands are freed? And we shall forget everything that has gone before!"

He held up the paper, enticingly spread open like a tablet before the free-trader's eyes, and eagerly waited for his assent. Again Dubawni saw the flattering terms and although he could not spurn the paper with kick or blow, he suddenly craned his neck forward and spat straight and true and copiously into Helbaud's eyes, so that the latter, half-blinded, drew back with a roar and a curse.

"Perdition!" he bellowed. "Up with him! Hoist!"

THE taut rope running up to the seat of the grinning ape of a Betarde above began to strain, and Masita's terrified eyes could mark the noose beginning to sink into the muscles of Dubawni's neck. A moment she stood it, but when she saw his heels begin to lift from the gray limestone and only the tips of his moccasined toes touching the rock, she gave a great lunge in Helbaud's grip and a great cry.

"*Mon Dieu*, father!" she shrieked. "I can not see it done. The price is too great. In the name of my mother you will yield, you will——"

She stopped abruptly with a little gasp, for clear and sweet yet mournful, like the unconscious bird-note of the feathered tribe's dreams, the call of the curlew came over the Manikuagan's water.

Out of the impenetrable dark beyond the half-moon fire-stain it sounded, and to Masita it rang as sweet as the reassuring voice of François Lavergne.

To the others it was nothing but a vagrant bird-cry in the night. They took no heed or notice till hard on the call came the whispering noise of paddles and the gruff rumble of men's careless words.

Instantly, with the instinct of the wilderness, the Arctic Fur men froze motionless. Betarde sat rigidly upon his branch, trying to peer down on the beshrouded surface of the stream. The men on the rope paused in their pull, eyes turned riverward, and Dubawni remained poised on the half-tightened rope, head thrown back, chin in the air and his moccasined toes scraping the rocks.

"Ba gar!" muttered Betarde, above. "Mebbe she's wan enemy. I'm better be get down to ma gun an' challenge dem."

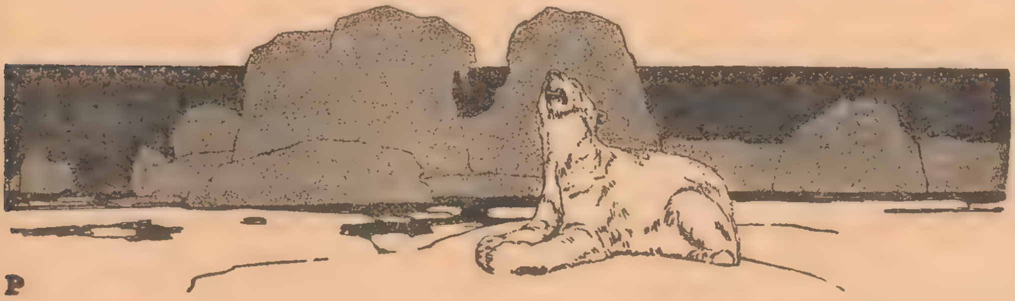
"No, stay where you are," ordered Helbaud, listening to the sounds upon the water. "It is but François and Boccairre. Enemies do not paddle so carelessly and talk aloud as they come."

The sound of the whispering blades in the water echoed louder, the inarticulate rumble of the voices increased in volume. Helbaud stared hard at the point where the crimson and black met upon the surface of the stream, and presently he made out the shape of a lone canoe, an eighteen-foot canoe looming up in the gloom.

"Yes, a small craft," he nodded. "It is François and Father Boccairre. Ho, François—" raising a loud shout—"come in, come in! And you—" wheeling on the crowd under the spruce—"ease on the rope a minute. Some one stick fingers under the noose to let him get his breath. It is not necessary that a man of God be treated to such a show. I shall take the priest off to the council-hall for my end of the business, and you may finish while we are gone."

Swiftly the Arctic Fur men obeyed. Dubawni's heels came down. His head came forward. He shook his head as a dog shakes the water out after a dive. The muscles of his neck slowly resumed their normal proportions, and his eyes turned with Masita's eyes, with Helbaud's eyes, with the eyes of every one of the heterogeneous throng upon the craft slowly taking shape on the outermost edge of the half-circle of lighted water.

TO BE CONCLUDED.



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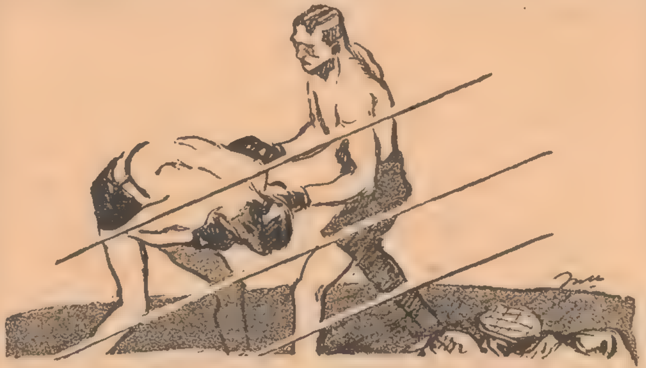


The RETURN of BILLY BLAIN

by WALTER GALT

Author of "The Second Rung," "Dorg's Luck," "Love and War."

WHY a man whose given name was Aaron, and whose father came from Poland, should have chosen Sweeny for a business name is neither here nor there; the point is that the proprietor of "Sweeny's Colosseum" sat on a tilting chair in the little inner office and looked gloomy.

"You come to talk bull or business, which?" he demanded.

Had he removed his patent-leathers from the dusty windowsill, it might have suggested interest, so he left them there.

"I want to fix a fight date for my man Connolly," said Ephraim Strobinski, testing a decayed chair cautiously.

"With——"

"Dunno yet. Want to pump you first."

"I'm dry. Dunno nuthin'. Tell you this though: the bottom's dropped clear out o' the fight game, welterweight division particularly. Ain't a chance. Public's sick o' seein' bum fights between a pair o' pugs afraid to lean against each other. I don't believe I'd take a dollar at the gate, not if Connolly 'ud guarantee to kill a man or give the money back!"

"Aw, have a cigar!" said Ephraim. "Take somethin' for it! Connolly's champion. Why, they pay to come and see him in vaudeville, and if you want inside dope from the man who's most interested—which the same is me—he's got the bummest act that ever was."

"Well, ain't you satisfied? Ain't you gettin' yours?"

"Ten per cent. I've a contract with him, calls for ten of the vaudeville receipts for me and fifty-fifty of the fight money. Stands to reason he's all for the stage an' I'm all for the real thing."

"Real thing, eh? What's real about Mike Connolly beatin' up a 'hope,' 'xcept the hope's headache? Who'd buy a seat to watch? Couldn't get a man who'd go three rounds an' take the beating for less 'n two fifty. Connolly 'ud want two thousand. Where 'ud I come in?

"There's only one man left that 'ud draw a nickel's worth in a fight with Connolly. He ain't forgotten yet, and he wasn't ever licked. He'd draw a houseful. But they can't come back and he knows it."

"Who d'ye mean?"

"Blain. Billy Blain."

"Him? Why, he hasn't fought for four years. His missus made him quit. A guy who'd throw over a good living—*and* the limelight—on a woman's say-so wouldn't have the nerve to fight Mike anyhow. Think up a real live one."

Mr. Sweeny bit the end off a cigar,

munched it thoroughly, spat it out, and put the cigar back in his pocket. He eyed Strobinski while he did it with the mien of an artist, judging lesser art.

"I've staged more fights," he answered, "than your man Connolly ever dreamed of winnin'. I've seen 'em fight, an' I've heard 'em talk, an' I know 'em. I know Connolly. He's a big, rough-housin' mutt, with more luck than he deserves. Just now the others are afraid of *him*, but it's my belief that if Billy Blain could be persuaded to get into a ring with him, Connolly 'ud show yellow. He's a cheese champion, Connolly is."

"Cheese nothin'!"

As Connolly's manager, Ephraim Strobinski displayed a line of indignation that alone was worth a good share of the gate receipts.

"Mike 'ud fight and lick anything alive that didn't weigh a ton more than he did. He's the best welterweight champion we've ever had. See what they say about him in the papers. Here—here's some clippings!"

Sweeny waved them aside, but allowed one beady eye to rest on a legal-looking document that Ephraim had pulled out with the clippings and laid on the desk.

"Nix," he answered. "They all say that, and they say it of all of 'em. They said it of Billy Blain too, and with more truth. He could have licked Mike Connolly and done it easy."

"*Could* have once, perhaps—when Mike was about ten years old. Now, Mike 'ud——"

"Would Mike dare?"

"I've told you, Mike 'ud——"

"You haven't got authority to sign him up in any case. He could go back on you."

"Could he? Just pipe this!"

He picked up the document and passed it over.

"Here's my contract with him. He's got to fight any one I say, and no one I don't say. Read it for yourself."

Sweeny read the contract carefully, and saw that the terms of it were clear enough. It had been drawn in Connolly's less palmy days, when he had been glad enough to get a manager on any terms at all, and like most contracts of that kind, it extended to the limit of prevision on the manager's behalf.

"WELL?"

There was more than the suspicion of a sneer.

"What's the use of that? You wouldn't dare sign him for a fight with Billy Blain. You wouldn't let him risk the championship."

Strobinski considered himself to be on perfectly safe ground. It was notorious that Billy Blain had given up the ring forever and was much too prosperous in his new profession ever to change his mind.

"I'd sign him for a finish fight, winner take all, if the law allowed it. He could lick Blain with one hand."

"I don't believe you'd dare sign him up for ten rounds and twenty-five per cent. of the gate money, win or lose."

"Wish I had the chance!"

"Then sign here!"

Sweeny pushed a sheet of foolscap paper over to him and handed him a pen.

"I'm not saying I can pull it off," warned Sweeny, as Ephraim stared at him in wide-eyed unbelief. "I'm not saying anything, except that you dasn't sign; *and*—even the rumor might be good for business. I'm callin' your bluff. I don't believe you dare write down conditions on that sheet and put your name to it."

"But what's the use?"

"Thought as much!" sneered Sweeny, losing all apparent interest and glancing at his watch. "When I believe a feller's bluffin', I like to call him, that's all."

"You've called a straight flush this time then! Here goes!"

"Nix. There's no money up. You'd have to post a thousand-dollar forfeit."

"What d'ye take me for?"

"For a guy that's afraid to post a forfeit."

"Forfeit for what?"

"Binding your man to fight Billy Blain on any date I care to name within six months. I've got to wake things up some way. If I can't get at least the rumor of a real fight with real money posted, I can start a talk-fest the other way, an' raise a howl in the press because Connolly won't fight. I want advertising, an' I'm out to get it."

Ephraim Strobinski drew the paper to him and began to scribble fast. It did not take him long to jot down the conditions which would cover a deposit of a thousand dollars. As in other legal matters, the shorter the agreement for a prize fight is, the better for every one concerned.

"That calls your bluff!" he snorted, blotting his signature. "You'll get no advertising at our expense. Who'll I make the check out to?"

"Mike Dunlop — 'ficial stakeholder— same as usual."

Strobinsky wrote out his check and laughed. "Better have the blame thing witnessed," he suggested.

Sweeny called in a nondescript from an outer room, and a moment later Ephraim Strobinski swaggered out, endeavoring to look as if he were amused. He had a vague sensation down in his anatomy of having let himself get caught, although he still believed in two things, one of which was as much a part of him as life itself. He knew that Connolly could beat anybody at the weight, and he believed that Billy Blain would never be induced to fight. He was not alone in that belief.

The nondescript, whose face was an enigma and whose clothes and bearing might belong to any of the more conventional callings, stood noncommittally until Ephraim was out of hearing. Then his eyes brightened and the Irish in him peeped through the stolid mask.

"What next?" he asked.

"A real job this time, Casey. Brains, and a close mouth, and determination ought to turn the trick—and there's money in it. Sign up Billy Blain to fight Mike Connolly."

"It can't be done!" said Casey, without a second's hesitation.

His mouth shut hard. He had stated a bald fact, beyond argument.

"See here, I don't pay a man—not real money, I don't—to stand here and tell me things can't be done! I pay you to do 'em —to do what I tell you. Get me? I didn't hire you to stand on one leg in my office and talk back at me, any more than I got you out o' that police mess for the sport of doin' it! I was speculatin' on your brains. I bought 'em. Now you think up something an' go an' use 'em. There's five hundred for yourself the day the fight comes off."

"Now you're talking!" grinned Casey. "D'you care who's in on it?"

"So long as he don't squeak before the time and don't want too much out of it, I don't. Who are you thinking of?"

"Ephraim Strobinski's cousin Max."

"Ever try to catch a fish with your hands?" asked Sweeny, looking up at him.

"He isn't easy," admitted Casey. "I'd have to have a thousand for myself."

Sweeny winced.

"Seven fifty is the limit!" he said firmly.

"You're on!"

Casey closed his face up like a knife, jammed a derby hat down over his ears and went out without another word.

II

LITTLE Mrs. Billy Blain had reached the point in her development where she was not always sure, as she had always used to be, that her opinion was right. The machinery-repairing shop was busy, and since she kept the books she knew as well as anybody what the profits were; but there were no more "lumps of money" coming in, such as used to follow Billy's thirty-minute battles, and without losing one mite of her puritanical dislike for fighting, in any shape or form, she had come to realize that the fight game is not the only business in which wickedness may lie below, or even on, the surface.

Billy's honesty, which had served him to such good purpose in the ring, stood by him now and helped out his tight-lipped efforts to succeed. Terence O'Hanlon was a far greater expert with machinery than he ever would have been as ring counselor. He could diagnose the symptoms of an engine's malady, and see through the clauses of a contract to the fraud beneath, as he never could have wrestled with a fight promoter's guile.

The partners were doing well enough. But Mrs. Billy knew at last that mere environment can never make respectability or unmake it. She knew that Billy would be honest and determined anywhere, and that not even the fight game could have undermined his character.

There were times when it came over her in thought-waves, that perhaps a good man in the ring had been more necessary than a mediocre one in the machinery-repairing business; that a man who knew his trade could do his duty anywhere and under any circumstances. At those times—they usually came when profits had been falling off —she would put her arm round Billy and ask him, "Isn't this better than the fight game?" The more her conviction weakened, the more emphatically she would make the query.

"Oh, this is all right," he would answer her.

He never grumbled. He always waded in and won, as he used to do when Terence managed him.

Terence O'Hanlon was in his element, of course. As an ex-ship's engineer there were few machinery problems that could even make him knit his brows. But he, too, felt in the great enthusiastic Irish heart of him that there was something lacking.

The business seemed a little humdrum. The returns appeared inadequate, compared to all that toil and thinking. And the social end of things, that meant so much to Billy's wife, seemed just as difficult to wrestle with as it had been when the pugilistic stigma overlaid them all. The grade above them seemed to care as little for a mechanic's pretensions as for those of a successful "pug."

He began, scarcely knowing it, to look around for other, more exciting business—something with less certainty attached to it, perhaps, but more possible reward. When a man named Casey cultivated his acquaintance and took him motor-riding, he fell by quick and easy stages into thinking motors. He began to study them and, next, to realize that there was room in that part of the Bronx for a well conducted agency and repair shop combined.

His dreams of a garage grew, and Casey said nothing to discourage him. Casey even took him on the car to prosperous repair shops, where Terence had a chance to talk to men in whom success had bred confidence and sometimes enthusiasm.

"Go to it!" they all told him. "The skin of the business isn't more than scratched yet. There's any amount of room."

So, Terence—priding himself on new-won caution, but already privately convinced—made more inquiries, and dropped incessant hints to Billy and his wife that were intended to start them thinking too. But Casey, just as Irish, quite as resourceful, and much less honest, did not leave all the hinting to O'Hanlon. He went and interviewed Mike Connolly, and that gentleman, too, began to drop in on the Blains of evenings.

It was pleasant enough to have the present champion of the welterweight division to discuss the fight game with. Mrs. Billy never asked him to the house, for that would have been beneath her social dignity; but she did not object to sitting with him by the big machine-shop door when the day's work was over and the hired men had gone; nor did she mind listening to the champion's boasts. It helped her realize how big her husband once had been, and made her gloat because he had left the ring unbeaten.

Mike Connolly's conversation was mainly about money, and he took very little pains to hide an undertone of scorn for Billy.

"I've cleaned up fifty thousand since you left the ring," he told Billy, and he told the truth to some extent, for he and his manager had divided that amount between them. He had had an easy time of it. Leaving the ring unbeaten, Billy had left the championship an open question, and there had been easy pickings for the shrewdly managed Mike, dealing one after another with the would-bes.

"Things are getting slack though," he continued. "The public don't storm the ticket office like they did. I need advertising and I'm out to get it. I'm going to buy an auto—a big yellow one, that'll make 'em stare; get arrested a few times for speedin' up Broadway—headlines in the papers—you know—'Mike Connolly, champion of the welters, arrested for the tenth time for speedin'.' Nothin' like it to set 'em talkin'."

"Decided on the car yet?" wondered Billy, more for the sake of making conversation than because of any interest.

"I was thinking of a Blennerhasset. Not made up my mind yet though. There's a heap o' different cars, and a feller has to watch points. Wish I knew some feller I could trust who sold 'em, and 'ud talk sense."

Terence O'Hanlon, looming big and bearded in the shadow of the door, nudged Billy in a way intended to convey discretion and diplomacy, and half a hundred other things. Billy looked up at him sharply, but O'Hanlon frowned.

"H-ss-t! Ye little runt. Keep on listenin'!"

SO BILLY listened and said very little, as his manner was, while Mrs. Billy sat quite still and dreamed of other days, when Billy came home bleeding a little now and then, but always with the bacon. They had been more exciting, she remembered, than the present, and Billy had never had to listen to another man's bombast.

When Mike Connolly had gone, and Terence O'Hanlon drew the two of them inside the door, he found her far less antagonistic to a new idea than he had expected. Of Billy he was always sure; the little fellow trusted him, in spite of a hundred and one mistakes made in the old days that Billy always had had to rectify. Mrs. Billy was the brake on progress, as Terence saw things—the skirt who had wheedled Billy from the roped arena in his prime.

"Did ye hear? Were ye listenin'? The feller wants a Blennerhasset. Did ye get that? Well, what is it but a Blennerhasset agency that I've been offered within the last three days? An agency for Blennerhassets! Us! O'Hanlon, Blain & Co. Blennerhasset autos, spare parts, tires, and so on, with a big sign, 'Gasoline,' painted up above the door. Talk about luck! Why, let's change the firm's name to O'Hanlon, Blain & Luck! We're it!"

"What is there in it?" questioned Mrs. Billy. She was a partner in the firm and had a right to speak; she held the check-book and signed her name alone.

"I was goin' to tell ye when ye interrupted me. The car sells for five thousand dollars net. We have to buy the car, but we get twenty-five per cent., which is one-two-five-o. Twelve hundred an' fifty dollars and the deal all ready waitin' for us! Why, we'd be crazy if we let the opportunity go by!"

They talked about it for an hour or two, growing gradually more and more enthusiastic under the spur of Terence O'Hanlon's eloquence; and when Connolly turned up again three evenings later, it was Billy who reverted to the subject first.

"We've taken up an agency for Blennerhassets," he informed Connolly bluntly.

"Good. I'm glad to hear it. Now I know where I can come and get a car. It's my idea a fish should swim in his own river. I'm one o' those guys that believe in stickin' to the crowd. I'd sooner trust a fightin' man, ex or not, than any o' these guys who think a bruiser and a sucker are the same thing. I'll buy a car from you—the price 'ud be the same to me wherever I get it. It's fair treatment I'm after. When'll you have a car to show?"

"I can have one here in two days' time," put in O'Hanlon. "A bran' new one, painted yellow, just as you suggested the other evenin'."

"Good for you!" said Connolly. "I'll come along and look it over. Got to go now—see you all the day after tomorrow."

It was rather a strain on the financial resources of the firm to pull out all that ready money all at once, particularly at a moment when money for work done on contract seemed particularly "tight." But the Blennerhasset people steadfastly refused to let the auto leave their works without a check for $3750, and the deal seemed so certain that Mrs. Billy consented in the end and wrote the check. They had the car, all new and huge and glittering, in the middle of the front of the machine shop when Mike Connolly dropped in again.

"Fine!" he vowed. "Splendid! Just the absolute real thing!"

And two men and a woman exchanged glances, exulting inwardly and striving hard to keep their feelings secret. There was a shock, though, yet in store for them.

Connolly had the money sure enough, but was not to be parted from it quite so easily as they had thought.

"Y'see," he explained, "the reason why I like to deal with a feller out of the fight game is that he's used to doin' business on the proper lines. He understands reason, and 'll listen to it. Now, I'm game to post a forfeit—five thousand dollars—and take that car on trial. A month's trial—that's fair enough; me responsible for damages; me to pay rent for the car if I turn it in at the end of the time and don't buy; you to get the five thousand if the car makes good. Money posted with the 'ficial stakeholder at Sweeny's Colosseum. That a whack?"

"No," said Billy. "We have to pay cash, and our terms are cash. We'll make good if the car doesn't."

But O'Hanlon nudged him, and Mrs. Billy frowned. Connolly held firm to his offer, and Billy gave way in the end. After all, the manufacturers had guaranteed the car, and Connolly offered to sign a proper agreement; there seemed little risk.

So the car changed hands, and presently the afternoon editions of the papers gave Mike Connolly enough front-page advertising to console him over and over again for the fines he had to pay in Court. One morning paper even went the length of devoting a half-column editorial to him.

Day by day the market price of Mike's appearance in the ring rose steadily.

III

IT WAS Sweeny, the proprietor of Sweeny's Colosseum, who broke the news. He broke it tenderly.

"I'd hate to see a decent feller flimflammed," he explained.

"What d'ye mean?" demanded O'Hanlon, smoking between Billy and his wife, as he usually did of an evening before the three went home.

"Did you sell a car by any chance to Connolly? Yes? Get the cash?"

"It's due tomorrow, Saturday."

"Well, I'll tell you what I've heard. It's a frame-up, and they don't intend for you to get the money."

The news fell like a thunderbolt, and made all three speechless. That money represented nearly all their loose capital, and it was needed in the business within a week.

"I'd do something about it quick, if I was you," suggested Sweeny, nodding knowingly and walking off, to avoid being further implicated in the matter.

"I wonder," wondered Terence out aloud, "whether Max Strobinski, who put me on to the Blennerhasset agency, is related to Ephraim Strobinski, who manages Mike Connolly? I never thought o' that before."

That was another thunderbolt. The possibility was obvious, and the circumstance, if true, was far from reassuring.

"Well," said O'Hanlon, "the sale's made, and we don't care whether we ever do another stroke of business or not with that gang. Suppose I cinch things? Suppose I—— What's the time?"

O'Hanlon jerked out his watch, and discovered that the hour was little short of seven.

"Cohen's often at his office after hours," he recollected. "Cohen's as sharp as they are. Wait while I try Cohen."

Without deigning any further explanation, he boarded a passing trolley car like a big wild turkey landing on a fence, offered a twenty-dollar bill in payment of the nickel fare, and offered to fight the conductor, "and all the company too," when there was no change forthcoming and he was asked to get off the car. The argument was still raging noisily when the car arrived abreast of Cohen's office. Terence, impatient of obstruction, swept the indignant man in uniform aside and left the car like a landslide, by the front end. He took the sidewalk in one leap, and the flight of stairs beyond it in another.

"May the L-l-lor-rd be praised! So ye're here!"

He burst the door open and discovered Cohen poring over legal books and documents.

"Get me a mandamus an' a habeas cor-r-pus writ, and any other thing convenient, but get 'em quick. I've money in my pocket!"

"Against whom? The world at large?"

Cohen peered at him from between a wrinkled forehead and the upper edge of horn-rimmed spectacles.

"That's for you to say—I'm no lawyer. Put your hat on quick. I'll tell ye while we're running for the writs."

"There is no Court sitting," reminded Cohen blandly. "Sit down and tell me all about it."

With a waving fist that was shaken, oftener than not, immediately under Cohen's nose for the sake of emphasis, O'Hanlon told him all about the Blennerhasset, and the five-thousand-dollar forfeit posted, and the terms of sale.

"Well," smiled Cohen, "an injunction served on the stakeholder would serve the purpose. I could get you that."

"In time?"

"Of course. Where a Judge of the Supreme Court is, there is the Supreme Court. I know where I can find a Judge at dinner. Will you walk with me? The thing to do is to get that money impounded by the Sheriff, and to get a hearing by the Court fixed for Monday. That would leave time for settling out of Court in the interim. The other side haven't any case, in my opinion."

"Will we impound the auto?" asked O'Hanlon.

"No, you—— I mean, no, Mr. O'Hanlon. No. Do you happen to believe in prayer—or incantation—or lucky stars—or things like that? Because, if so, work your oracles and manage that the other side shall keep that car until tomorrow morning. If they keep it, it'll be their car, and the money your money. It is possible they have not got legal advice."

A LITTLE less than two hours later Terence O'Hanlon leaped off another trolley car and sat down heavily, but with an all-triumphant sigh, between Billy and his wife. He lit a big black panatela before he said a word to either of them.

"So that's all right!" he proclaimed at last. "The Sheriff has the bank receipts for the five thousand dollars, and they've got the car still. That means it's their car and our money. There's a Court hearing fixed for Monday next, and Cohen says it's all over but the shouting. Is that our 'phone bell ringing? Answer it, ye little runt. I'm weary."

Billy disappeared into the darkness, and Mrs. Billy sat beside O'Hanlon, bathed and basking in a feeling of relief. As treasurer and bookkeeper of O'Hanlon, Blain & Co., she knew and could feel even better than the others how sorely that five thousand would be needed in a day or two. The knowledge that the Sheriff had it and that Cohen's verdict of the case was optimistic, was a huge improvement.

There was hope now, and she enjoyed it —until Billy stepped out of the dark again, tight-lipped, and with that jaw of his set somewhat forward. There was no sign at all of fear or dread in all his make-up; he only looked a little more pugnacious when his world was going wrong.

"It was the Sheriff," he said quietly. "Mike Connolly's turned the auto in, and he's had to hire a place to store it. Mike's lodged a caveat, or something—I didn't catch the word—and the Sheriff says we can't have the car without a Court order."

"Well, we'll have it Monday mor-r-rnin'!" said O'Hanlon.

But neither of the others answered. They sat and stared into the night while the grizzled veteran beside them laid his elbows on his knees and hung the whole weight of his head and shoulders on his hands.

"Oh, I know what it is!" Terence moaned. "It's me again! It always was me, and I'm not fit, I'm not, to be a partner in a decent firm!

"Can ye remember one case o' my managing my end o' the affair properly? Ye can not, for there was none! When ye were fightin', it was always me that got ye into scrapes. Now, when ye're runnin' a repair shop, it's me again! What can I do—what can I do—what can I do to help ye?"

"Do?" said Billy, getting up and shoving both hands in his pockets. "Do, Terence? What did you do in the old days? Stood by, if I remember, and saw me through the mess. Are you going to run away now at this time o' day?"

"I thought we were all three friends, Terence," said Mrs. Billy quietly.

Terence O'Hanlon kept his hands behind him, and stared at them, wondering.

"So ye thought that, did ye? So ye thought that?"

His hands fell to his sides. He held them straight out—one to each of them—two huge, horny flippers, waving in the dark.

"Ye were right! And I'm thinking—that I'll be more use to ye laughin' than I will cryin'. Come on home!"

He threw a hairy arm around each neck, as rough as any she-bear with her cubs, and twice as loving.

"Come on home. 'Tis little use I am to either of ye—little use it is; but I'm better standin' up than lyin' down. We'll feel more like fightin' in the mornin', and there's sure to be a fight—a legal fight—and that's a sight worse than ten o' the other kind."

"Yes, there'll be a fight," said Billy gloomily.

"Fight! It seems the whole world is made of nothing else but fight! Oh, I hate fighting!" groaned Mrs. Billy.

IV

THE next morning—on the fateful Saturday on which five thousand dollars should have found their way into the bank account of O'Hanlon, Blain & Co.—a strange procession drifted to the shop instead. There was Mike Connolly, trying hard to look superior and wronged, but contriving only to look brazen; Ephraim Strobinski, beyond pretense of anything but rank audacity; Sweeny himself, in a straw hat with a pink band, all tilted to one side, that gave that nose of his a singularly un-Irish look; and Casey, quite a little way behind, endeavoring to look as if he were a portion of some other crowd.

"I didn't think it of ye!"

Mike Connolly put all the injury he could command into his voice, and looked at Billy as a father might behold his erring son. Billy did not seem to like the look, for his arms folded over his chest and the muscles of his forearms swelled and twitched.

"Call in the Sheriff, hey? Call that the action of a gentleman? I was goin' to buy that car. I was goin' to offer you four thousand for the junk—and that's three thousand more than it was ever worth. Now seein' how you've behaved, I'll offer you a thousand. You can suit yourself. Take the thousand or fight."

"I'll fight," said Billy, speaking through thin lips, but keeping his voice down to a dead, wickedly calm level.

"Legal fightin's about all you care about," suggested Connolly. "It's pretty easy to see why you left the ring!"

Terence O'Hanlon took a long pace nearer, and Ephraim Strobinski executed an immediate flank movement to cover him. Some kind of strategy was evidently being worked out.

It became Sweeny's turn to take a hand in things. With upturned palms and gestures that were eloquent of sweet conciliation, he slipped in between Connolly and Billy Blain, even making some show of elbowing Mike Connolly, as if he had had enough already of that gentleman's opinion.

"Now, see here, Mr. Blain," he intervened. "See here now. You much better settle this amicable, between gentlemen, y'understand. Now see. If him an' you go to law over this, you'll be fightin' and appealin' and fightin' again for a year or more. Now, why not settle out o' Court? Be reasonable, same as any man o' business would be."

"We've got a hearing set for the case on Monday next," said Billy, with a sinking in his heart that very nearly found expression in his voice.

"Sure you have," sneered Connolly. "That's when we begin! We'll fight for three years from then on, if your money lasts that long!"

"Fight?"

It was Mrs. Billy's turn. She simply had to interfere. She could not help herself. She pressed forward between the past and present champions and faced Connolly, like a wet hen with one chicken facing a stray cat.

"Fight," she repeated—very quietly, although she trembled like a boiler under steam now. Her ruffled feathers were all smooth again, and she looked much more dangerous.

"All you dare fight is boys in the prelims! You're a good hand, you are, at beating up the 'hopes,' but if a real man offered to put the gloves on with you, you'd run away! Fight, with you and your crowd, means underhanded trickery. Use another word, please."

"My quarrel ain't with you," sneered Connolly, pushing her out of the way, and turning to face Billy. He had not turned before he realized that what he had come for was achieved. Billy's fist caught him behind the ear as he turned, and spun him like a top. The blood squirted from his ear, in proof of the fact that Billy's old terrific left had lost little, if any, of its cunning, and the right that followed to the jaw sent the present champion headlong in the mud.

Sweeny and Strobinski rushed forward in a quite unnecessary movement to protect the prostrate Connolly. Billy was standing still, with his arms folded again and his nostrils dilated. Terence O'Hanlon dragged him back and stood in front of him, and in a second he and Sweeny and Strobinski were windmilling in a wordy argument, through which the titles "coward," "shyster," "sucker," alternated with reiterated bellowings of "crooks" and "robbers."

"Yah!" yelled Strobinski. "Your man dasn't fight a blind man! That's his line—a punch when the other isn't looking. Hits out from behind a woman's skirts. That's the way he won the championship!"

"That's false!" hissed Mrs. Billy, wading in again. After more than four years of married life her husband was her hero still. "He could fight and beat two Connollys!"

"Yah! Talk's easy! Here comes the skirt again!"

Connolly had found his feet again by this time, and had wiped off a little of the blood. His suit was ruined though.

"Quit arguin'!" he ordered. "What's the good o' talkin' to a coward? He dasn't fight."

Billy made an instant move to give the lie to that assertion, but Terence O'Hanlon caught him around the waist and held him back.

"My man here is the unwhipped champion o' the welters," declared Terence. "If he wasn't a man of his word—if he hadn't promised—he'd prove it. He'd whip anything on legs that dared stand up to him!"

"Let him prove it! I release him! I give him back his promise!"

Mrs. Billy seized O'Hanlon by the arm, and tugged at him to make him notice her.

"Did ye hear that?" asked O'Hanlon, with a sudden calmness and something resembling triumph in his voice. "Did ye hear? Billy Blain here challenges for the championship—or rather, he takes it up again. He's champion now! There's nobody dares try to lick him!"

"We hear!" yelled Sweeny and Strobinski both together. "Are you his second? You his manager? You ready to sign for him? Good! On your way, Connolly! We'll do the rest."

AS IF the whole thing were a stage performance, prearranged and perfectly worked out, Connolly walked off. Sweeny and Strobinski, followed closely by Casey, led Terence O'Hanlon to a neighboring saloon. Billy and his wife went back together to the office.

"Oh, what did I do it for?" moaned Mrs. Billy, refusing to be comforted. "I was mad! If I'd had half your strength of mind I'd never have given you that promise back. You'd never have fought again. And now —it's all my fault—you'll fight—and you'll be—b-b-beaten!"

No promises or arguments of Billy's had the least effect on her. She was disconsolate. Her little slowly cultivated world of middle-class conventions seemed to have fallen away from her at one swift drop. She was even inconsolable when Terence came back beaming, like a man who has the best of things.

"The whole business was a plant," he grinned. "From the start it was a trick to get you back into the ring, my son! I've agreed that their five thousand is to be posted again with Dunlop, but this time as a stake, and we're to cover it by Monday afternoon. They give us odds—five thousand to four thousand for a ten-round go at Sweeny's Colosseum this day six weeks. Weigh in at the ringside, welterweight or less. Sweeny offers sixty-six per cent. of the gate, to be divided equally."

"But we haven't got four thousand!" moaned Mrs. Billy.

"Mortgage the shop!" ordered Billy. "How about the buzz wagon, Terence?"

"We can have it back the minute we cover their stake."

"All right. Were there any other terms?"

"Had to agree to their referee—Englehart."

"Terence! D'you mean that?"

"Sure I do. What's the matter?"

"Only this. Englehart has refereed every fight that Connolly has won. Englehart drives a trotter these days. D'you suppose that Englehart'll give me an even chance to win?"

"My mistake, sonny!" said O'Hanlon. "My mistake, but I'll fix it. I'll interview this fellow Englehart and soak him with a piece of wood. He'll not referee the fight."

"No," said Billy quietly. "We'll have no dirty work, thanks. We stand to win about ten thousand, don't we, counting the gate receipts? And we need four thousand to cover their stake? Raise the money, Terence. Mortgage the place—go ahead. Stack one thousand away in some safe place in case of accident, and cover all the two-to-one money you can get with anything that's over. It's make or break. No half measures! I'll do the fighting. I'm in training from this minute!"

V

THINGS panned out better than had been expected, for the advertising, free and otherwise, had been enormous. The moving-picture people paid a handsome premium for the right to photograph the fight. Billy stood to make fifteen hundred dollars extra from that source alone. The advance bookings were tremendous, for the crowd remembered Billy Blain and swarmed to see him.

Before eight o'clock on the evening of the fight they were turning away money, and that was proof positive that Sweeny could not have crowded in one more spectator anywhere, even with the aid of a hydraulic ram. Billy's share of the gate receipts alone would be six thousand dollars, so that his stake would be covered, win or lose; but it was a gloomy little party, all the same, that started off for Sweeny's Colosseum.

As Billy and O'Hanlon knew, as the crowd knew, as Mike Connolly and his seconds knew, as the papers had been croaking for the past six weeks, it is no light matter for a has-been champion, with only six weeks' time to train in, to endeavor to come back, after a four-year absence from the ring. Billy had seen a dozen try to do it, and every single one had failed. His one advantage lay in the fact that he was still unbeaten.

Mike Connolly was popular, as most flashy fighters are while their star is in the ascendent; and he had advertised himself thoroughly of late. Billy was mere history. His name was known, but his personality was utterly forgotten. Connolly had spent most of the evening in the hall, had let the crowd see him, and had been cheered and joshed between each preliminary bout. The spectators felt as if they owned him before ten o'clock came, and unconsciously they had begun to look on Billy Blain as an outsider.

For the first time since he had begun to fight in the United States, Billy did not have O'Hanlon for his second. Usually the huge Irishman's tornado voice had bellowed him encouragement from his corner, and had drowned the opposition jeers; but on this occasion O'Hanlon had private and different instructions, and proceeded to carry them out while a mechanic from the shop looked after Billy, crawling unapplauded through the ropes.

While the roars of applause for Connolly were all but lifting off the roof, and nobody was thinking of O'Hanlon, that gentleman sought out the referee and backed him off into a corner of the ring.

"Speakin' just as man to man," said Terence, "I'm in favor of an absolutely on-the-level fight. Did ye ever see a thing like that?"

He produced a one-inch washer from his right hip pocket, and held it out for Englehart to see. Englehart said nothing.

"I can throw one of those," said Terence, curling his long forefinger round the washer lovingly, "so good that the man I singled out would drop dead in his tracks. D'ye get me?"

"What about it?"

"Count slow, that's all!"

"How d'ye mean?"

"This. Ye can't have me put out o' here, for I've bought my seat, and I'm one of the principals as well. I'll be sittin' there down by the ringside, in the middle of the front row. Ye might remember that."

"What's that got to do with me?"

"This. I'm partial to a slow count. No favoritism. One second full between each count. Same for both men, whichever's down. Get me?"

Englehart said nothing, but began to sidle off.

"There'll be no fight and all bets 'll be off," advised O'Hanlon, "if ye try to have a thing done to me. Just you remember, and ye're all right!"

"They can't come back! They can't come back! They can't come back!" the crowd began to shout, with monotonous insistency, and the referee believed it. After all, he thought, why worry? There would be no need to do any dirty work.

"I always count slowly," he said, nodding to O'Hanlon.

"Three to one on Connolly!" yelled an enthusiast at the far end of the hall. "Three to one against Blain!" echoed a man at the ringside, displaying a fat roll of yellowbacks in proof that his offer was not mere hot air. O'Hanlon caught Billy's eye, and Billy nodded to him. O'Hanlon pulled out the last five hundred dollars of the mortgage money and bet it against fifteen hundred of the other man's.

"That's the lot!" he reflected cheerfully. "We're up against it now and no mistake! Here's hoping the little runt's got a good left punch. He'll need it!"

He found another man had occupied his ringside seat when he got back to it—a fat, pompous individual, who grinned straight up at him and said, "Indeed?"

"Get out o' this!" commanded Terence.

"Hush, you idiot!" warned an attendant. "That's——"

"The —— he is," swore Terence. "He ought to know better!"

He stooped and picked up the interloper by an arm and leg, swung him once, and pitched him out over the heads of the seething crowd behind. The roar of delight and the momentary scuffle where he landed, drowned what the referee was saying, but drew that gentleman's attention to O'Hanlon once again. He appeared to be a man quite ready to do violence—a man to be on guard against, at least! The men were back in their corners, waiting for the bell, before the crowd had quite recovered from the shock of having a fat man flung above its heads.

BILLY looked dwarfed and meager and disconsolate compared to Connolly. At the call of time he stepped to the center warily. His movements and his dark skin-tights made him look insignificant. Connolly, on the other hand, flashily ribboned and obviously in the pink of good condition, ran in jauntily and started to lead off as if the whole affair were more or less a joke—as most of his more recent battles had been.

He reeled back against the ropes behind him and then again and again, as Billy followed up. There was blood flowing from his nose before he realized that Billy was a real antagonist. By the time he had recovered something of his balance Billy was away and out of reach. The crowd applauded. The half-forgotten favorite began to come into his own again.

Two of these punches had hurt. Connolly remembered now that he had a grudge to pay, as well as a championship fight to win. He came back from the ropes with the vicious, snarling rush of a wild beast out for blood. The next move was almost too quick for the eye to follow. There was a thud as Billy sidestepped, and Mike Connolly sprawled headlong, to take the count of five.

The count was a little overslow, O'Hanlon thought, sitting with his watch in hand, and one hand in his right hip pocket; but he kept his seat and made no move to attract the referee's attention. The rest of that round was a series of scrambling clinches, in which Connolly sought to wear down Billy's strength and recover his own wind.

The second round was a very different affair. Connolly had received instructions from his corner, and was taking things more seriously. Although Billy had a man only to use the towel on him, and no one to advise, it was evident to any one that the one-time champion was dangerous and capable of winning unless Connolly used all the head he had. Nobody knows better than a prize-fighter that advice from his corner between rounds will never win a fight; the lonely man who has more ring experience than friends to shout to him is not beaten until the count of ten.

Connolly began to box. The set of his jaw, the sidewise, waltzing movement of his feet, the shrunken, hugged-together crouch of all his muscles, like a cat's about to spring, set the fans holding to their seats in frenzied anticipation.

There was a pass or two—a wary, watchful interchange of taps—and Mike thought he saw an opening. In a second the two were at it, toe to toe, neither giving an inch of ground, sparring like greased lightning. They crossed the ring crabwise. Billy ducked a swing and landed on Mike's stomach with a short-arm hook that brought a grunt.

"Finish him, Billy!" roared O'Hanlon.

They had agreed before the fight that Billy's best chance would be to force the pace and win, if he could, in the first three rounds.

But Connolly was no beginner. He cut and chopped and elbowed himself clear. Billy's second claimed a foul at the top of his lungs, and the cry was taken up by half the fans, but the referee affected not to notice Mike's butting with his forehead, although he had brought the blood streaming down into Billy's eyes. The crowd began to hiss, but still the referee kept watching Billy and ignoring Connolly's fouls.

Half blinded by the blood, Billy was alternately clinching and boring in with short-arm body blows that were disconcerting Connolly considerably. They jarred him from head to heel each time they landed. It looked to O'Hanlon, then, as if the referee said something. Immediately Connolly stepped back, rushed in with a right-hand swing that landed like a pole-ax on the crown of Billy's skull, and stepped back for another one. But down went Billy.

"One!" called the referee, beginning to count almost before Billy had touched the floor. "Two—three—" Then his eye caught O'Hanlon's. That gentleman was standing up, and his right hand was little more than barely in his pocket. "Four—five—" he counted, still quickly.

But the fist emerged, and the long forefinger was quite plainly crooked around something round and hard. Billy had begun to stir.

"Six—seven—eight—" the referee said, very slowly. Billy scrambled to his knees. Connolly rushed in and stood right over him to drop him again the second that he left the floor.

"Stand back!" yelled a hundred of the fans. "Give the man a chance!"

But the referee said nothing.

"Nine!" he counted.

Billy rose. Mike sprang in to finish him, and *Bong!* the gong came to the rescue.

Terence O'Hanlon left his seat and hurried round to Billy's corner.

"How are ye, sonny?" he demanded. "How are ye makin' out?"

The giant was trembling.

"I've got his number," whispered Billy, reaching for his water bottle. "Make that referee count slow, that's all!"

O'Hanlon was amazed; but in all his ring battles he had never once known Billy make a false prediction.

"All right, sonny. I'll keep my eye on him."

"If you do, I've as good as won," said Billy, and O'Hanlon went back to his seat again.

"Time!"

Round three was a hummer from the start. Mike overreached himself and hit the floor within the first ten seconds. Billy, like a clean little sportsman, jumped clear instantly, and the crowd applauded. The contrast between his behavior and Connolly's was marked, as he intended that it should be. The feeling of the crowd was beginning to be with him, and that helps more than many fans imagine.

MIKE was on his feet again before the referee saw fit to start the count, and came in with a rush. There followed another toe-to-toe slamming-match, in which Billy had by no means the worst of it, for Connolly gave ground slowly toward his corner. Again the referee appeared to whisper to him—or so it seemed to Terence—and suddenly without cause or excuse, but just exactly as Billy's left started on a swing, Mike dropped down on one knee.

"Foul!" yelled Mike's seconds instantly.

But not even that referee dared give it. Billy had stopped in time. He had pulled the blow. He did land on Mike, but much too lightly for it to be called a foul, and he stepped back with a grin and a wave of his glove towards the crowd that was more eloquent than words. That wave of the hand, though, and the momentary inattention, looked like losing him the fight.

Mike was up from his knee in a flash, rushed in like a flash, and landed. The blow sounded like a pile-driver at work, and Billy fell forward on his knees.

"He's out!" yelled the crowd, watching Billy swaying to and fro and sinking lower. But Terence O'Hanlon, with his eye on the referee and one finger around the washer, had his doubts about the exact spot where that blow had landed.

"Stand back!" said the referee, waving one hand up and down, but not counting aloud.

"Ar-r-re ye countin'?" bellowed O'Hanlon; and the referee looked down at him. The washer was protruding through O'Hanlon's fingers. He did not want to die, but on the other hand he did not dare begin counting all over again so late.

"Two!" he called; and Terence's right hand went back towards his pocket.

Billy's attitude was strange. He was on one knee. One hand was down beside him and the other was raised up to his face. He looked almost as if he were praying. Connolly, with one eye on the referee, came one pace nearer.

"Four—five—six—" tolled out the third man in the ring, watching O'Hanlon shrewdly and ignoring Connolly. Mike took a short step closer. He stood now almost directly over Billy, in flagrant disregard of the rules, ready to nail Billy the instant that the other rose. Billy swayed a little as he knelt. He seemed about to topple over backward. To make sure, Mike came yet six inches nearer.

"Eight—nine—" called the referee, slowly enough to suit O'Hanlon.

Billy moved slightly. Connolly leaned in to administer the sleep punch. And then—in a flash—the utterly impossible occurred.

Billy straightened. He rose like a rocket from the floor, and that terrific left of his went home on the peak of Mike's jaw, with a pop like a cork escaping from a bottle. Mike was lifted backward off his feet by a shock like dynamite. He fell full length on his back, to lie there motionless while the whole house rocked applause.

The referee was forced to count him out. He dawdled over it until the fans laughed at him, but Mike gave no sign of life, and in the end the "Eight—nine—ten—he's out!" was yelled for him by the fans in unison. Billy helped them carry Mike over to his corner, and returned to his to find O'Hanlon there before him, dancing elephantine jigs of joy.

"Ye little runt!" he shouted. "Ye decent little runt! D'ye know what ye've done? Ye're champion again, an' ye've saved the firm besides!"

Terence threw two enormous arms around him and tossed him high above his head.

"Gentlemen!" he roared. "Here's the still unbeaten welterweight champion of the world! Cheer him!"

They cheered until the building rocked.

"Come back! Come back!" they shouted.

"He's back!" roared Terence. "He'll fight any living crittur that can make the weight!"

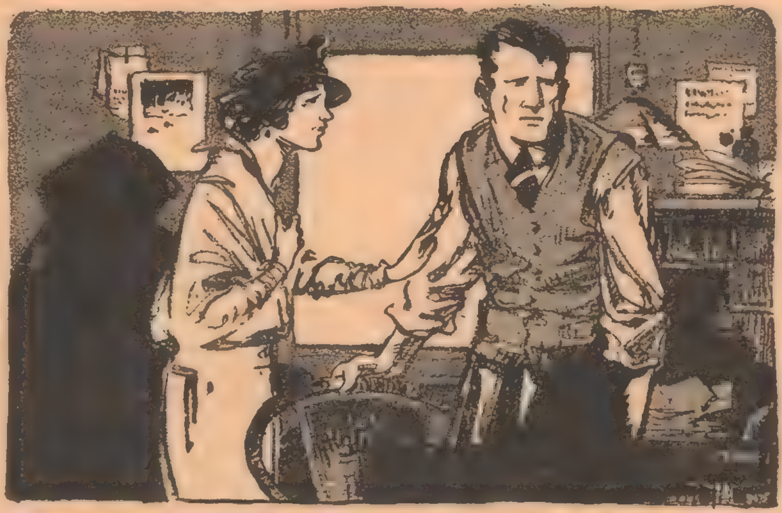
Then he lifted Billy across the ropes, and let him find his own way to the dressing-room, while he ran around to Sweeny's office and connected with the unexpected wealth.

"Billy!" he said, bursting in presently. "Listen! Countin' bets an' stake an' movie money, we've fourteen thousand U. S. iron men to take home to the missus! What d'ye think she'll say?"

"She says it's excellent!" smiled Mrs. Billy, and the face of her looked up. The rest was disguised in a boy's brown suit. "Come and lend a hand," she ordered; and Terence, with his pockets bulging, held Billy's head, while she pricked a swelling underneath her hero's eye.

"Who'd ha' thought it?" laughed O'Hanlon.

"Thought I wouldn't do my share?" asked Mrs. Billy. "There—call a taxicab. We'll take him home."



A CANCELED SALE —

by ARTHUR SOMERS ROCHE

Author of "For Bravery," "The Sport of Kings."

FRAZEE, business manager of the Morgantown *Sun*, entered the office of the paper's editor and owner, a frown on his face and in his hand a letter.

"Well, Chief," he said gloomily, "they've went and gone and done it! Look at this!"

He smoothed the letter flat upon the editor's desk, and the latter read it swiftly. Minot must have been a good poker-player had he ever taken up that game. Not a trace of emotion, save possibly quizzical good humor, was in his voice as he spoke to Frazee.

"Well?"

Frazee merely stared, an admiration that he could not conceal in his snappy eyes. As if the admiration slightly embarrassed him, Minot turned his head back toward the litter of copy-paper and proofs before him.

"I'm awfully busy, Jack," said the editor. "And if——"

Frazee exploded.

"Busy! You aren't too busy to take

notice of a letter from the Morgantown Merchants' Mutual Association, are you? A letter in which they inform the *Sun's* business office that until the news and editorial policy of the *Sun* undergoes a radical change the members of the Association can no longer consider it good business to use our columns for advertising! You ain't too busy——

"Why, Chief, that's the last straw! We've lost the public printing; the city advertising went five months ago along with the printing. The traction company left us out of all their advertising of the new park at their terminal; the gas company quit us six weeks ago; the electric light and power company has given notice that they'll not renew their annual contract at its expiration next week! All those were bad enough; but if the retail merchants tie a can to us—Chief, we're out on a limb and they're down below with dogs and guns. It's about our cue to climb down!"

Minot drummed on his desk a moment before making reply. When he did speak his voice was calm, inflexible, as determined as on that day to which his words referred.

"Jack," he said, "when I bought this paper six months ago and brought you with me from New York to help me run it, what did I say to you?"

"You said that you'd been a boy in Morgantown; that it had always been your ambition to run a paper here. An honest paper! That Morgantown had as rotten a political and business machine as Minneapolis or Philadelphia in the good old days, and that you were going to smash it; that you were going to run an honest paper—not a commercially honest paper, but an ethically honest paper."

"You sum it up better than I could myself, Jack," smiled Minot. "Well, have I ever done anything to make you think I'd go back on my word?"

"No, but——"

"Then why do you expect me to now?"

Frazee hit the desk with a clenched fist.

"Because you invested fifty thousand dollars your uncle had left you for the benefit of people that aren't worth it! You came to Morgantown to lift the people here out of their sloth! To be an expression of the better opinion of the city! You told me that Morgantown people stood for rottenness and corruption because there was no one to lead a fight for better things.

"You bought this sheet for twenty thousand dollars. You said you'd spend the rest of your inheritance to awaken the people to civic decency. And they haven't responded to you. You've pointed out rottenness; you've shown how cleanness may be achieved. And what happens? First the big corporations shut down on their advertising and now the retail merchants tie a can to you. Tom, you've got about five thousand left. Are you going to sink that for the benefit of a lot of ungrateful, unappreciative——"

"How do you know that?" snapped Minot.

"Know what?"

"What you said—about the people being unappreciative and ungrateful?"

"Good Lord! doesn't this letter prove that?"

"The retail merchants aren't the people—only a small portion of them," said Minot. "The people— Jack, it's true I've alienated advertising, but I've gained subscribers."

"And you can't run a daily newspaper on subscriptions," said Frazee. "Look here, Tom, you've fought a good fight—against odds. You're down practically to a shoestring. Another month or so and you'll have to mortgage the plant; then you won't meet the interest, and——"

"Then you advise me to quit fighting the rotten ring?"

"I advise you not to commit suicide," said Frazee.

"Suicide, eh?" Minot smiled faintly. "Suicide? Well, Jack, if fighting the good fight means suicide—then suicide it is! I understand that the *Bugle* has made you a good offer to go over there. No use sticking to a sinking ship, Jack. I'll release you from your contract, and——"

"Look here, Tom Minot!" cried the business manager. "A little more of that talk and I'll hang one on your ear! Just because I'm a few years older than you and blessed with a lot more horse sense doesn't mean I'm a quitter! You can't stop me from giving you advice; I can't stop you from refusing to take it. But that doesn't mean that I'm not with you. If you've got to scuttle your own craft, why—well, it's your ship, isn't it? *Bugle* be ——!"

He blew his nose loudly and muttered much profanity in an undertone. He picked up the letter from the Merchants' Association.

"What'll I write to them?" he asked. "Tell 'em to go to the devil and be quick about it?"

"No," said Minot. "I'll attend to that."

He picked up pencil and paper and wrote rapidly. When he had finished he handed the result to Frazee. The business manager whistled.

"Say, Tom," he said, "salt away enough to buy two tickets to New York, will you? I think we'll need them in a few short months."

"Maybe," said Minot, "but, Jack—a good fight, in a good cause—isn't that recompense enough? Even for defeat?"

"It's your money," said Frazee. "And—and—— Tom, as your business manager I can't advise you to throw away your chances for making this paper a success, but as your friend, and as man to man—Tom, I'm proud of you!"

THEIR hands struck together; then, as if ashamed of such emotion, Frazee hurried from the editorial office. Minot struck a bell. A boy entered the room. Minot handed him the letter from the Merchants' Association and the few paragraphs he had penciled on copy paper. The boy left the office.

For a long time young Minot, editor and owner of the Morgantown *Evening Sun*, stared gloomily out of the window, seeing nothing save the wreck of high hopes, the passing of a proud ambition. An hour passed; then the rumble of the presses in the basement aroused him. With a bitter smile he unlocked a drawer in his desk and took out a bank-book.

It was not the first time he had checked up the balance there after visits from Frazee announcing the withdrawal of advertising. But this time the balance was smaller than ever before. At first, under his editorship, the paper had responded. Morgantown had hailed with delight a livening of the moribund *Sun*. People had rushed to advertise; but in the last few months receipts were not up to expenditures, and were growing steadily less.

"Five thousand four hundred and eight and forty-three cents," he said with a grim smile. "And election is eight weeks away."

He sighed.

"Well, I suppose I'll have to see if I can borrow ten thousand on the plant. No need of waiting until the last minute."

He clapped his hat on his head and left the office, with a word to his city editor about extra editions if need arose. Then he went to the bank. There he was received with courtesy by the president, and in an hour his business was transacted. The Morgantown First National gladly lent him ten thousand on his note secured by his paper. But he had hardly left the president's office when that dignitary called up on the telephone one Stewart Morris.

"Why didn't you refuse the loan?" demanded Morris angrily, after the banker had finished talking.

"How could I? It's a good business proposition. And if I hadn't, some other bank, here or elsewhere, would have done so. He'd have got the money anyway, so it wasn't up to me to turn down a good piece of paper like his note, was it?"

The man at the other end of the wire was silent a moment. Then he said:

"No, I don't suppose it was, but—oh, well, it's all right, Benson. Much obliged for telling me."

"Not at all; I thought you'd want to know."

"Rather," said Morris.

He hung up his receiver and looked about his small office—ostensibly a place for the transaction of real-estate business, but in reality the seat of the invisible government of Morgantown. He thought a while, then scribbled a hasty note, rang for a messenger and ordered a swift delivery.

The envelope was addressed to Philip Landers, mayor of Morgantown. Then the boss of Morgantown turned again to the copy of the Morgantown *Evening Sun* which lay before him. And he read for the third or fourth time the defiance which shrieked from its first page. For there, in a box, was the Merchants' Association's letter to the *Sun's* business office. Beneath the box was the line: "The *Sun's* Answer to Dictation." And beneath that was a short editorial by Minot, in which he declared that not all the power of the invisible government of Morgantown could prevent him from continuing to expose the rottenness of the ring that governed the city.

Though the *Sun* be stripped of every line of advertising the *Sun* should still continue to expose the grafters. The *Sun* bore no ill will toward the members of the Merchants' Association; the *Sun* pitied them for their cowardice in not daring to defy the boss of Morgantown. And the *Sun* would continue to shine upon the dark places of the city, despite the shortsighted merchants who could not see that betterment of civic conditions meant betterment of business.

Morris grunted as he finished reading.

"Why couldn't those —— fools just quit advertising without sending that letter?" he snapped. "That didn't help. Only fools write letters, anyway. Now I'll have to think——"

He was still thinking when he left his office; still thinking when he reached his house, still thinking through his lonely dinner. But thought had brought him a plan at nine o'clock when, in answer to the note of the afternoon, the Mayor of Morgantown slipped quietly into the house of the boss.

"Seen the *Sun?*" was the boss's first question.

The Mayor nodded.

"It didn't bring him down, did it?"

"No, blast him," said the boss with a tinge of unwilling admiration in his voice. "That Minot is a real fighting guy. Wish he were on our side. But that's out of the question. Smoke?"

He shoved a box of cigars toward the Mayor, and there was silence for a while. The boss did not encourage conversation; naturally taciturn himself, he disliked loquaciousness in others. The Mayor awaited the boss' pleasure. But not until both cigars were half consumed did Morris speak. Then it was to the point, albeit slightly reminiscent.

"When Minot came here last Spring," said the boss, "and started his attacks on you and me—chiefly on me—both of us decided that he, a New York newspaperman, was simply a cagy citizen, trying to put over a little hold-up. Didn't we?"

The Mayor made no reply; whatever the boss said, though couched in interrogatory, was assertion. The boss continued:

"So we sent him a little hint to the effect that he held good cards, and asked him to name what he wanted. But not even the promise of continuance of the public printing, that the *Sun* had always had, got him. Not even taking it away got him.

"Then you offered him a place on the Finance Commission. He couldn't see that. Then we hit his pocketbook some more. We've been hitting it ever since. Last week the Merchants' Association got the tip that unless they withdrew their advertising from the *Sun* the city ordinances would be enforced; fire-escapes would have to be built, sidewalks kept clear. Like suckers they write him a letter, and now he's published it.

"The people are beginning to believe that he's persecuted because of his attacks on us. They're beginning to believe in him and—Landers, you won't succeed yourself as Mayor of Morgantown unless he's called off."

The Mayor paled.

"You mean you won't give me a renomination?"

"I'll nominate you all right," said the boss. "But you'll be licked. This young feller will support a Citizens' Ticket and—we'll be licked. I happen to know that his circulation has increased eight thousand in the past two weeks. You know what that means. The people are waking up. And you also know what it means for you to be beaten."

"It would be a poor reward for my services to—" began the Mayor pompously.

Morris cut him short with an oath. "Your services be ——! I'm thinking of my contracting company! I'm thinking of all the business I'll lose if you're not Mayor. I'm not thinking of glory; I'm thinking of money! And now — Minot's centering his attack on the Morgantown Construction Company; he's making that his main issue. He says that everything we build is overpaid and underdone. If a Citizens' Ticket wins, he'll have the new Mayor and council cancel the contracts already made. And if we go to court—we can't go to court."

"Why not?" asked the Mayor. "Your construction company—I call it yours, as you do—does good work, doesn't it?"

The boss spat disgustedly.

"Why keep the front up with me, Landers? You know that—well, we do good work, yes. But other companies could do as well—for less money, maybe."

"I—I don't care to hear details," said the Mayor hastily. "I——"

"What a swell hypocrite you are, Landers," sneered Morris. "However — never mind. The thing is, you've got to win; Minot must be called off."

"How?" demanded the Mayor eagerly. Weak, a creature of the boss, Landers, of one of Morgantown's oldest families, prided himself on his gentility. It was not part of his gentility to know the methods of the boss. He closed his eyes to the details always, obeying his orders, and comforting himself with the reflection that politics was different from business anyway.

"Every man has his price, Landers," said the boss sententiously. "Sometimes it's money, sometimes it's power, and sometimes it's woman. We've tried the first with Minot; we've tried the second—that Finance Commission job was enough for any man that'd lived in the city only a couple of months. Now we must try the third."

"But Minot's a gentleman," said Landers.

"I said woman—not women," said the boss. "Minot's clean; I've had watchers on him since the first week he was here. But—did you know he was in love?"

"In love? With whom?" gasped the Mayor.

"That's a mighty pretty daughter you have, Landers," said the boss.

The Mayor glared; he rose from his chair.

"Morris, how dare——"

"Sit down," rasped the boss. "You said yourself that Minot was a gentleman, and we know he's clean and honest. What are you kicking about?"

"But my daughter——"

"Yes, your daughter. I happen to know that he's got a photograph of her in his room," snapped the boss. "Cut it out of a newspaper. Has it framed and on his bureau. What more do you want? Get her to invite him to call."

"I'll see you——"

"Cut it," said the boss. "Look here, Landers, you want to be reëlected. I tell you, with Minot against us, there's not a chance. With him with us—or with him just cutting out his yap about construction steals and graft — well, Landers, do you want to quit office or be Mayor again?"

THE weak are very often selfish. Chosen by the boss to be Mayor because of his family's standing, and because personally he was popular, Landers knew that without Morris he would never have held office. And holding office was the breath of existence to Landers.

He could not meet the eyes of the boss when he left his house with the tacit understanding between them that the Mayor's daughter should be used to win over young Minot. Even the weak and selfish may not be lost to a sense of shame. And it is possible that if his daughter had not made an opening for him next morning Landers might have ignored his tacit arrangement with the boss, for he loved his daughter and was proud of her, and the decency within him rebelled at making her an unconscious tool of Stewart Morris.

But she did make an opening, and he knew that a man reëlected to the mayoralty would have a fine chance, two years later, of winning his party's nomination for the governorship; and the governorship was but a step toward the Senate, and— What qualms a wakeful night had brought him were stifled at her first words after her good-morning kiss.

"Father," she asked, as she poured his coffee, "how does one get something printed in the newspapers?"

"Advertisement or announcement of a meeting of the Woman's Club?" he asked smilingly.

"It's an advertisement and a meeting of the Woman's Club—both," she replied. "The club is trying to raise ten thousand dollars to build a recreation ground for children, and we're going to hold an entertainment and——"

"That's news," said the Mayor. "The papers will print that."

"And how do I go about it? That part has been turned over to me."

"Why," and his Honor hid the exultation in his eyes by veiling them behind a morning paper, "I should say that it would be a good idea for you to call upon the editors of the papers. There's Moran of the *Bugle*, De Witt of the *Times*, and Minot of the *Sun*. Go direct to them; I don't think you'll have much difficulty in getting space from them."

She frowned.

"The first two are all right, but Mr. Minot—I'd ask no favors of him. Why, he's abused you and your administration shamefully."

Landers smiled.

"That won't affect his wanting to print news, my dear. And as regards his attacking me—that's not personal; it's politics. I don't hold it against him. In fact, I've thought of inviting him to dine with us. A fine young fellow.

"You're the hostess of this family, Janet. Mr. Minot, while young and overenthusiastic and too cocksure, has in him the makings of a most valuable citizen. If you don't mind, you might convey to him my desire to have him dine with us, when you see him. There are certain things I'd like to talk over with him. Of course, he's young, but he has brains. Invite him, my dear."

"After what he's said about you?"

"Never carry politics into your private relations with people, my dear," he smiled. She stared at him.

"Father," she exclaimed, "you're the most magnanimous soul that ever lived."

And he winced behind his paper.

"Not at all, my dear, not at all."

THAT afternoon Janet, having been promised plenty of space by the other two of Morgantown's papers, called upon the publisher and editor of the *Sun*. There was a moment of frantic sweeping of litter behind a screen, a wild straightening of desk and chairs, when her name was brought in by an admiring office boy. Then, slightly flushed, Minot received his fair visitor, the girl whose picture was enshrined in his room, and whom he had worshiped from afar these several months.

He had never seen her as close to as this, and the realization that she was more beautiful than her picture, and that the nearer the view the greater her charm, was enough, almost, to render him tongue-tied. However, he hid his perturbation from her, and, after the request for publicity for the Woman's Club had been proffered and granted, she extended her father's invitation, and, attracted by his open, frank countenance, added to the invitation a little warmth on her own account. And Minot, surprised that the Mayor was so genuinely broad-minded and able to divorce politics from personality, accepted the invitation.

Three nights later he dined at the Landers home. Unfortunately, shortly after the meal, the Mayor was summoned to the telephone and later announced that a most important matter called him down-town. Would Mr. Minot forgive him? It was unpardonable, but—it was extremely important. And——

"Mr. Minot can come again," said Janet. "Meanwhile, if he'd care to stay and be bored by the Woman's Club's plans——"

Minot stayed. Two nights later he called again. This time the Mayor and he had a most pleasant talk, in which the Mayor made no effort to win Minot over to his support, but led the discussion into channels of civic interest apart from Morgantown's own problems. Later Janet played for them and sang. Before leaving, Minot asked permission to call upon the girl. It was granted. Within a week he called again; and this time the Mayor was discreetly absent from the house.

And as he had attacked the rottenness of Morgantown, so did Minot attack the girl's heart. He had reached the age of thirty unscathed by Cupid's darts. So, having been immune so long, he was but the easier victim. Within two weeks he knew that first impressions — pre-impressions, for he had been strongly attracted by her photograph —were in his case but precursors of a lasting love.

For from the bottom of his heart, and with all that was fine and strong within him, he loved Janet Landers. He was not the one to dally; at the end of the third week he told her. And she accepted him, with the provision that her father should approve. And so they went to him. And he, with many an ejaculation of surprise and amazement, and with a secret feeling of shame, gave them his blessing.

"Perhaps," said Landers, "Janet can win you over to our side."

"That's the thing that bothers me, Mr. Landers," said Minot frankly. "I—can't stop rapping the administration, sir. Personally, for you—I have the liking I want to have for my fiancée's father. But—perhaps, on the outside, I see more than you who are in the game, sir. I—I can't stand for the men behind you. I hope——"

"Not another word, sir," said the Mayor benignly. "I should not attempt to influence you for the world."

"Isn't father a noble man?" asked Janet a little later.

"Square as a die," said Minot enthusiastically. And then they talked of other things.

That night Landers called up the boss.

"It's all right," he said softly. "He's ours; we'll tighten the ropes in a day or so."

"Nice work," grunted Stewart. "Your Honor will remain your Honor."

And to Landers's credit be it known that he grimaced in self-disgust at the twice-repeated word "honor." But politics is politics. His ambition was stronger than anything else within him. And four nights later, with election but a month away, Janet met Minot in the Landers drawing-room with a smileless white face and in her nervous, shaky hand she held a copy of the day's *Sun*.

Minot winced as he saw the paper. Good reason! The day before Mayor Landers had been renominated by the machine. A reporter from the *Sun*, while the convention was in progress, had telephoned the office and asked for a relief. When his relief came, the reporter—his name was Atherton—had left the convention hall. He had not reported to his city editor until the next morning, and then he had written a story that fairly sizzled and that abounded in detail.

It seemed that Atherton had heard a delegate make the statement that "Jim Constant is up in Loring's place, stewed to the guards and anxious to shout all he knows to the whole world. Too bad he couldn't keep sober on convention day. Jim'll break his plate with the boss one of these days."

Atherton was a very shrewd young man. He knew that Constant was a lawyer of parts, whose weakness for drink had made him sink to the level of a henchman for Morris. He knew that Constant's brain had often been invaluable to the boss, and that if Constant wanted to talk—would talk——

Atherton managed, by heavy bribes, to get to the room in which Constant was drinking. It was easy to make the drunken lawyer talk, as Atherton did not scruple to state that he was a friend of Morris's, sent down to keep the lawyer company. And Constant had stated, in so many words, in the course of his drunken boasting, that Mayor Landers, as a preliminary to nomination, had agreed to use his whole influence, if again elected, to swing to the Morgantown Construction Company all city building. In response to a question Constant stated that such an agreement had been a condition precedent to the Mayor's first nomination.

NOW a great many people in Morgantown knew of this—rather, believed it. But it had never been proved, never been admitted. For Constant to admit it was a most vital bit of news. Of course, it would later be denied, but—the *Sun* had printed Atherton's story. And now Minot faced the girl.

"Of course," she began, "you know what I want to say."

"About that story concerning Constant? I'm sorry, Janet, but—Atherton tells the truth."

"But father says Constant lies," she retorted.

He bowed, but said nothing. Her lips trembled.

"It's—it's been unpleasant, Tom, having you and father on opposite sides; but—I have borne it. But this—this accuses father of being—dishonest."

"I didn't see it until it was printed," said Minot truthfully.

"But if you had—you'd have printed it?"

He was forced to admit that he would have done so. Her voice and manner hardened.

"I've been talking with father. He is the noblest man God ever made. He says to let this attack on him in your paper make not the slightest difference in my feeling toward you. He says not to let politics interfere with love. But I am not as noble as my father. I can not love a man who calls my father dishonest, or permits him to be called dishonest."

The great issue was raised, as Minot had known all along it must sooner or later be raised.

"Janet," he said, "if your father does not carry political differences into private life, why should you? Your father and I look at things differently. He thinks that it is all right to promise contracts to Stewart Morris' company, for it's Morris who owns the Morgantown Construction Company. Now, if Morris' company built honestly I could appreciate your father's feelings, in a measure. But it doesn't. Every building erected for the city by Morris' company is weakened by graft. The materials are poor; lives are endangered and——"

"But father says that he made no promise," she said indignantly. "Further, he says that the Construction Company does good work."

"Your father and I differ," he said.

"And so do you and I," she said coldly. She stripped her engagement ring from her finger. "I am glad we did not announce our engagement," she said, "and that few people know of it. For it is ended now."

The ring dropped into his palm and he stared, dazed, down at it.

"Janet," he said hoarsely, "you can't mean—your father——"

"Father says not to mind; to love you just the same. But—I feel differently about the matter. Good-by."

Now Minot loved the girl, and he knew

that she loved him. Theirs had been one of those swift-kindled loves doomed ever to burn brightly. That he or she could ever forget was preposterous. He knew that she was suffering even as himself. So he pleaded. But she was adamant; she loved him, but—he must cease his attacks on her father and on the party.

Stewart Morris knew men. Tom Minot had his price; it was a woman. When he left her that night she still wore his ring, and he had pledged himself to cease attacking the personal integrity of the city administration, and to discontinue all articles that insinuated illicit agreement between Landers and the boss.

MINOT did not sleep that night until almost dawn. For he had sold himself. Nor could he blame the purchase—Janet. It was admirable of her to stand by her father. But for him supinely to yield to a woman his honor! Then he thought of the woman. And he went to sleep finally, thinking himself content; that self-respect was well lost for love. And he awoke a bit defiant, a bit contemptuous of all that was right and good. What did they count against a woman's love?

Frazee was in his private office that morning when he reached the *Sun*. The business manager fairly hurled himself upon his chief.

"By heck, Tom," he cried, "we've got 'em on the run! We've got the last piece of meat for the voters to chew on! It's the Citizens' Ticket in a walk and then—my boy, victory! For you—for the *Sun*, for——"

"What's up?" snapped Minot.

"It's up to you to write the biggest editorial you ever pounded out! The Clinton Avenue School collapsed at five o'clock this morning. If it had been four hours later nine hundred kiddies would have gone down beneath it — to death! And the Morgantown Construction Company built it! It proves what you've been shouting all along —that their work is rotten; for the school was only finished two months ago, and——

"But I'm keeping you. I only wanted to be the first to congratulate you, Tom, on your chance to make good; to show the people of Morgantown that you've told the truth about the rottenness of the city. It's your proof that the Construction Company cheats the city. It's the proof that'll make the voters turn against the boss, defeat Landers, and—go to it, Tom, go to it!"

A boy entered, bringing proofs of the first-page story which told of the collapse of the Clinton Avenue School, built by Morris's company, and so poorly constructed that only the kindly fates were responsible for the fact that a thousand children had not lost their lives. Minot read the story. Then he opened his pocketbook and looked long at a little picture of Janet Landers. He kissed the smiling countenance once. Then he put it away and reached for his pen.

"Dear Janet," he wrote. "Something has happened. The Clinton Avenue School collapsed early this morning. Fortunately no one was inside the building, but you can imagine what it would have been like if the collapse had occurred half an hour from now —at nine o'clock.

"Morris's company built it. Your father sanctioned the letting of the contracts to Morris's company. Whether because of an agreement, in fulfilling a preëlection promise or not, doesn't matter. What does matter is this: your father and his administration have let Morris have many contracts. If your father is reëlected Morris will have many more. The city will be robbed and lives endangered. And—and—I can't permit that to happen without a fight on my part.

"Dear, I've counted the cost and—the rule of Morris must be broken. The only way to do that is to defeat your father. The only way to make that defeat certain is to continue attacking the Morgantown Construction Company. For your father's administration granted the company the contracts. Your father signed them and—— I'm sorry, dear, but — I must do what I think is right. Good-by. Tom."

He sealed the note and sent it on its way. Then, white of face and stern of mouth and eyes, he began writing an editorial, the most powerful he had ever written, referring to the collapsed school building, pointing out that this was but a sample of what must occur to city buildings provided Morris's company continued erecting them, and showing that the company would undoubtedly continue to erect them if Landers were reëlected.

He finished and rang for a copy-boy. His door opened and he looked up.

"Boy, rush this up-stairs to the composing-room and tell——"

HIS jaw dropped and his words ceased. Janet Landers stood framed in the doorway.

"What is that?" she asked pointing to the sheets of copy-paper in his hand.

"An editorial attacking your father, with reference to this morning's incident of which I wrote you," he told her.

She closed the door behind her. She advanced into the room.

"Tom! You love me?"

"You know it," he said.

"Then why— Tom, could I marry a man who accused my father?"

"You know better than I."

"Would you ask me to?"

"I've released you," he said. "I thought, of course, you understood that I realized you wouldn't marry me—now."

"And I'm not worth——"

"You're worth— Janet, you're worth life, death, heaven, hell — Janet, you're worth everything; but— Janet, I'd give you my life; I'd give you all I ever hope to be; I'd sacrifice my future; I'd do—but, girl, last night I gave you something that wasn't mine to give. I didn't realize it until this morning when that collapse of the school showed me what I had done.

"I'd given you my honor; and Janet, that was not mine to give. My right arm—I'd cut that off for you. But my honor—God gave me my honor, clean, untarnished. He gave it to me in trust, to return to Him some day. Janet, I must keep it clean and——"

A copy-boy entered, to stare from girl to man in undisguised amazement. Minot handed him the editorial.

"Take that up-stairs," he snapped.

But the girl put out her hand and took the sheets of paper from the amazed boy.

"Come back in a moment," she said, and gently urged him toward the door, shutting it behind him. She faced Minot.

"Tom, it's your last chance. Look at me. Would you give me up?"

"Janet, you're more to me than anything except——"

"Then you'll give me up?"

"I must," he said tensely.

One second their glances met, and hers was infinitely sweet. Then she opened the door; she beckoned to the boy and handed him, not Minot's editorial, but another paper.

"Here it is," she said. "Mr. Minot wants you to run it on the first page."

She shut the door quickly.

"You see, Tom—" and she blushed—"*I* could not give *you* up. No—" and she raised her hand—"don't call him back. You won't need to print your editorial attacking father, because he has resigned the nomination and will not run for Mayor. I gave his statement to the boy."

"You mean——"

"I mean that after you called me up I spoke to father; I told him that I knew you were honest. I told him that I was convinced that you would not give me up unless you were sure you were right. And I told him that if you said the Morgantown Construction Company had a hold on my father that—it must be true!"

"Good Lord," cried Minot. "And your father——"

"Denied it. But I asked him why he let the city give contracts to the company; if he would do it again in view of what had happened this morning. Tom, Father never got a cent from Morris. You know that."

"Of course," said Minot. "Your father's not a grafter; he likes to hold office, and——"

"But he's resigned his candidacy now," she said. "And so——"

"But why did you not tell me this when you came in? Why——"

"Last night, after you had gone, I thought of what you had done, Tom. Tom, as father—sold himself—for office, so you had sold yourself—for me. And I did not want to marry a man who would sell himself. I would have broken our engagement today. But this morning you wrote me and told me that you had not yielded; that you'd do the right. But I doubted, and I came down here to see if you would resist a personal appeal. If you hadn't—but you did, and——

"Tom Minot, are we engaged? If we are, why don't you say so, and ask me, and—do something?"

And Minot did something.

It was some time after the Citizens' Ticket had defeated the makeshift slate of the machine, and consigned Boss Morris to political oblivion, that that worthy was asked if he thought every man had a price of some sort.

"I used to think so," said Morris. "I still think so. Only sometimes—" and his eye took on a far-away, reminiscent look—"the man you've bought will return the price and cancel the sale."

UNOFFICIAL

by M·S·WIGHTMAN

Author of "An Occasional Hero."

CROSSLY is a man whom, without knowing why, one always associates with the diplomatic service. Except for a few months as assistant secretary at St. Petersburg, I never knew of his holding a post in it. And you may run across him anywhere—sipping vermuth at a round table on the sidewalk in front of the *Café de la Paix*, chatting over a cigar at the *Wagon Lits* in Pekin, or telling a story at the Metropolitan in Washington; and it is as apt to be of the behavior of the Gaekwar of Baroda on a recent hunting trip, as the latest bit of gossip from court circles in Vienna.

When Willis told me I would find him, fresh from a trip to the Orient, in the smoking room of the club, I hurried up the stairway.

He was sitting with folded arms, his long legs stretched out before him, gazing absorbedly into the fire. The heavy carpet deadened my footfalls as I approached and dropped my hand on his shoulder, intending to surprise him.

I must have done so, for with a hoarse cry he sprang to his feet, wheeling backward, and stood, his fists clinched, facing me. His face was white and little drops of perspiration beaded his forehead.

"Pardon me, my dear fellow," I began.

He cut me short with a laugh. His color had returned and he passed a handkerchief lightly over his forehead.

Never mind—you startled me, all right. It isn't booze or anything else to be ashamed of. I'm glad to see you."

He waved me to a chair and fell to chatting of things which had happened since our last meeting; but occasionally, as he talked, he shot a quizzical glance in my direction and I knew he was enjoying the curiosity his behavior had caused me.

At last I cut in on his remark. He had been speculating on the latest exploits of the German submarines and illustrating a point by recounting an escape he had had when the failure of an air-gage to register had sent to the bottom of Manila Bay the one in which he was cruising as a guest.

"I'll admit you have me guessing. What caused it?"

He turned his gray eyes on me, a smile flashing over his thin face.

"You want to know why I jumped? All right, I'll tell you." He made a grimace. "And I suppose you will hash it up for some of your publishing friends."

"If it is worth while, I will," I admitted candidly. This is the hash:

Before I come to the story, however, let me ask whether it did not strike you as curious that China kept drawing out her recent negotiations with Japan, that she made a show of resisting even when the Mikado began to mobilize his troops, and then suddenly, without apparent reason, she changed front and yielded? Perhaps she was waiting for a message from the United States telling her what assistance she could ultimately count on—not one of those polite messages which go by cable and are read in every foreign office, but one of those real messages which go by word of mouth and are delivered only to the person for whom they are intended.

Perhaps Japan feared the import of that message and did not wish it delivered. These matters are only speculations; now I'll tell you what happened, and you can draw your own conclusions, for you will know as much as I do. I was merely crossing to try to get some real Ming vases for a Pittsburg magnate who wished to prove that he was the real thing in art rather than in dollar-making.

IT REALLY began in the smoking-room at a card game. And right here I may as well mention that there were on board, beside the usual nondescript crowd, an agreeable, somewhat loud, but very cordial young fellow named Markham, who was going over to try to sell the Chinese Government some new locomotives for its Kalgan Line. Everybody knew it, for five minutes after he had collared you—and he collared anybody who fell in his way—he told you enthusiastically of the virtues of his brand of coal-eaters. Markham radiated salesmanship, and he was as friendly as a fox-terrier.

Also—although they don't belong here, for they did not figure until some time later, and you, of course, would have saved them for their proper entrances—a quiet old gentleman named Robinson who, obviously in moderate circumstances, was carrying out his cherished ambition to make a trip around the world before he died. Everything was new to him and everything placidly interesting. He neither sought nor avoided acquaintances, and soon fell into his niche, looking a good deal at the sea from his chair on deck, attending services and whatever festivities were gotten up, and sometimes coming into the smoking-room for a glass of lithia, when he would look on for a few minutes at a chess game, if one were in progress, or at the rubber in which Markham always participated. But at such times his face invariably wore a puzzled expression, as if the complexities of the game were too much for him.

And then there was the missionary—just one of the missionaries, half apologetic, half resentful in his manner, who stuck strictly to his crowd and whom, I venture, not three people on board could have told from any other missionary. He shunned the smoking-room, and seemed even to consider Markham's cheery "good mornings" as liberties. His name, by the way, turned out to be Dr. Samuel J. Carter.

And a dapper little Jap, Mr. Kozu, who dressed immaculately, was the last word in politeness, whom you were apt to stumble across anywhere on the ship, and who, hands down, won the championship in the pillow fight we staged a couple of days out from Honolulu. You know you sit on a spar, facing your opponent, with a pillow in your right hand, your left in your pocket or held up in the air, and at the signal whang away at him. You must not hold on except as best you can with your legs. Of course it is partly knack, partly strength, but most of all a perfect coördination of all your muscles and your mind. He knocked Ted Blossom, who you remember was Yale's best half-back and all-around athlete, off the pole as easily as if Blossom had been a sack of meal. Kozu never played bridge, but he often watched the game, looking over Markham's shoulder.

And now for the fireworks. It was after dinner, the fifth day out from Honolulu, so that we were just about midway between that port and Yokohama. The sea was inclined to be roughish, and about eleven o'clock Markham's partner, saying that he was beginning to feel a bit squeamish, left the game for his cabin. I had dropped into the smoking-room about that time, and at the urgent request of the other players I took his place, although I seldom play bridge.

A few minutes later, Mr. Kozu, whom I had noticed in earnest conversation with one of his countrymen behind a table in a retired corner, got up, apparently with the intention of turning in. As he passed our table, he paused, as he had often done, and standing behind Markham watched the play. His hands were in the pockets of his dinner jacket; I remarked that particularly, because it gave him an air of well-bred ease which you so seldom see in a Jap dressed in our garb.

Presently the ship gave a sharper lurch than any which had gone before; it threw him momentarily off his balance, and he saved himself by resting his left hand on Markham's shoulder. He was tremendously apologetic as he straightened up, seemed chagrined to have lost control of himself, even for an instant, and with a low bow left the room.

All rather trivial, and I should never have thought of it again, except for what happened afterward.

It was perhaps ten minutes later, and the room was deserted except by the four of us and a couple of China boys who dozed behind the bar, that Markham glanced around with an expression of surprise at the man who sat on his left, a beefy Englishman, Colonel Cowper, who was as matter-of-fact as a head of cabbage.

Cowper was studying his hand with the painstaking thoroughness with which that type of man does everything. Markham seemed puzzled.

"Did you tap me on the shoulder just now, Colonel?" he asked.

Cowper looked up slowly.

"I beg pardon, what did you ask?"

With a nervous laugh, Markham repeated the question.

The Englishman stared at him, a shade of annoyance in his face.

"Touch you on the shoulder? No, certainly not; why should I?"

"And none of you fellows did, I suppose?" Markham asked doubtfully.

He laid his hand on the table, and to hide his confusion slowly drew his handkerchief from his pocket.

"That was a funny thing," he said after a moment's pause. "I could have sworn some one tapped me sharply on the shoulder just now." He still seemed suspicious as he picked up his cards. "What was it, two hearts? I bid two, no trumps."

The game proceeded without further interruption; but gradually Markham grew listless; once or twice I noticed him pass his hand over his shoulder, as if unconsciously it were troubling him. At last, after the close of a rubber, he pushed the cards away from him, as with a yawn he stretched himself.

"I am going to bed," he said. "I'm as stupid as an owl. The motion must have gotten me."

It was the first time I had ever known him to break up a game; he was typically one of those "come on, just one more rubber" men.

WHEN the steward tried to awaken Markham the next morning, he found him dead in his berth. There was nothing to show the cause of death; and the ship's doctor, who examined the body, pronounced it heart-failure.

When I learned that poor Markham was gone, the events of the preceding night came crowding back to my mind. I remembered what he had said about the feeling of having been tapped on the shoulder. I recounted the circumstance to the doctor, but beyond a slight red blotch, such as follows a local irritation, his shoulder was quite normal in appearance.

We buried Markham in a sea that was as quiet as a pan of water—one of those glassy-green seas which are found in the mid-Pacific where you aren't conscious even of the long swell of the ocean. As I turned away from the rail, I caught sight of the Jap. He was gazing at the ripples which had gathered at the spot and which were rapidly falling away. His face wore the expression I had noticed on it when he upset Blossom in the pillow fight.

Back of him in the crowd stood Mr. Robinson, with his head still uncovered and his face as placid as usual. At that moment Dr. Carter, the missionary, passed rapidly by the elderly tourist. As he did so something passed between them, some signal, some message, something so intangible, so slight, so deft, that if I had not been gazing directly at them it would have escaped me altogether.

After dinner that night I went up to the smoking-room for a cigar; and as I turned from the bar, I almost bumped into Mr. Kozu, who had been standing immediately behind me, although I had not heard him enter. It gave me a queer start. He was immaculate, dapper, impenetrable. He bowed a cordial "good evening."

"Won't you have a cigar?" I asked.

He took a perfecto and insisted that I join him in a liqueur. I did so at a side table, taking care to have it between us.

We fell to chatting. He talked easily, but with that hint of self-consciousness which a Japanese never seems to lose in conversation with a Westerner. I mentioned Markham's death; he gave no sign of emotion.

"Your ideas of death are as incomprehensible to us as ours probably are to you," he said. "With us the individual is nothing, Japan everything. If she needs our lives, we give them naturally, not with any feeling of extraordinary sacrifice, but as a simple duty. If there is a hereafter, we are only that much sooner admitted to its joys; if not, what difference does the cessation make?" With his small, yellow hand he made a slight gesture of tolerance, as he smiled lightly. "The old school, of course, would not have made it conditional. In any case Japan goes on to her glorious fulfilment."

"And if some one stood in the way?" I ventured.

The murky whites of his eyes grew darker as the shadows of his lowered lids fell on them.

"Certainly what we are ready to give, we should demand of others."

Through the open doorway behind Kozu I saw Mr. Robinson enter the room, and after glancing around quietly, take his seat near the entrance. He drank his customary glass of lithia, lingered a few minutes as if in sheer idleness of anything to do, and then went unhurriedly out the way he had entered.

The Jap had given an almost imperceptible start when he heard Mr. Robinson speak to the waiter; then he continued to chat, but I had the feeling that he was on guard, as it were, as long as the old gentleman was in the room.

It was late when I said "good night," and left Kozu sitting in the smoking-room, glancing over a Japanese paper which he had picked up from the seat beside him.

The night was dark, with a considerable head wind; and though we were running along on a fairly even keel, the decks appeared deserted, as they usually were by this hour, except for stray couples who were huddled in dark corners. Before going below, I decided to take a couple of turns around the main deck to clear my head and try to shake off a certain vague uneasiness which had taken possession of me. It took considerable effort to walk against the wind, and I could not hear my own footfalls for the noise of the water as it was driven against the side of the ship.

In the semi-obscurity beside the rail and beyond the rays of the decklights, I made out a figure standing with its face toward the sea. As I rounded the corner of the social hall the second time, I purposely veered outward toward the rail. I thought it was Dr. Carter, the missionary, although I could not be sure.

I had gotten almost to my cabin, which was on the deck below, when I remembered leaving on the couch in the social hall a copy of the oversea edition of the *Times*, which contained an article I wished to clip. I retraced my steps, found the paper, and was about to descend again, when directly outside the window beside which I was standing I heard a faint explosion, followed by the thud of a body falling.

The unexpectedness of the sound startled me for a moment, and I had hardly gotten to the doorway of the hall when Dr. Carter entered hurriedly from the deck, glanced furtively about him and, without having seen me, walked quickly down the main corridor along which the cabins were placed.

I slipped over to the head of the corridor and watched the missionary. When he reached a cabin well to the rear of the ship, he turned the handle of its door; but as he placed his foot across its threshold, he sprang backward, wheeling around suddenly. For an instant he stared about him blankly, then, shaking his head as if puzzled, he absently rubbed his shoulder. A moment later he disappeared into his cabin.

I formed a pretty shrewd guess of what had happened, and evidently the thing had been done so quietly that no alarm had been raised; but I had no wish to be concerned in it. I again slipped down the main stairway to the lower deck.

You know how the cabins are arranged down there: in series of four, two outer and two inner, opening on to a small aisle leading off from the main corridor which traverses the length of the superstructure. As I turned into this smaller aisle, I bumped into Mr. Robinson. He was placidly apologetic; said he had been reading in his cabin, and was on the point of having a glass of lithia before turning in for the night. He begged me to join him in it in the smoking-room.

We had hardly given our orders when the first-officer entered. His face was white and he opened and closed his hands nervously. Evidently he was tremendously excited.

When he reached the middle of the room, he said:

"Mr. Kozu has been found on the deck—shot. All of you are requested to come at once to the Captain's cabin."

He said it like a man reciting a speech he has learned by heart, in a loud tone, so that Colonel Cowper who, with his nose buried in a book, was sitting before a half-consumed soda on the opposite side of the room, might hear.

Mr. Robinson turned in his seat and, placing his hand behind his ear, asked in a mildly curious voice.

"What did you say, sir? Some one has been shot? Is he dead?"

"Yes, a first-class Japanese passenger, Mr. Kozu. The Captain wants to see every one who is now on deck."

Colonel Cowper had risen, finished his drink, and was approaching the officer.

"Rummy business, eh? Who did it?"

"That's what we want to find out," said the man sharply. "Please come at once."

There were a dozen or more people, beside the Captain, in his cabin when we entered, evidently couples who had been rounded up on deck.

"These are all, Captain!" said the officer saluting.

The Captain waved him a curt dismissal. You could see at a glance that he was furiously angry. He toyed for a moment with his grizzly mustache, which stuck out in Bismarckian fashion, before briefly recounting what had happened and asking us to await the doctor's report.

I'll tell you the silence in that cabin was electrical. Everybody glanced furtively at his neighbor who had suddenly changed from an inconspicuous passenger to the potential notoriety of the central figure in a ship's murder case.

"Who was this man, Captain?" asked Colonel Cowper.

"A pottery manufacturer of Osaka. He was found lying on deck by the night watchman."

A moment afterward the doctor entered and in a low tone reported to the Captain. In his left hand, he carried a small, carefully wrapped package which he presently handed to the Captain who placed it, unopened, on his desk, as he turned his chair to face us.

"The man has been dead probably less than an hour," he said. "The bullet has been located. It penetrated the heart. Has any one seen or heard anything which might throw a light on the matter?"

The Captain's question was met with a blank silence. Every one seemed afraid to speak, as if by so doing he might draw suspicion on himself. I was on the point of making a beginning, when the Englishman cut in:

"You were talking with him this evening, Mr. Crossly, were you not? Perhaps he said something which might have given you a clue."

At this a tall, thin man, one of those men who seem always to delight in anything which gives them a momentary importance, a Mr. Kling from somewhere on the Pacific Coast, added significantly:

"And I saw Mr. Crossly walking around the deck tonight, it must have been just about the time the shot was fired. He certainly ought to be able to tell us something."

His voice had a ring of triumph in it; you could see he was more than ready to take over the rôle of prosecutor. The others looked at me expectantly, half-convinced already that I had done for the Jap.

I said that I had talked with Kozu about such subjects as any two casual acquaintances might discuss, nor had I noticed any suggestion of apprehension or fear in his manner, although there might have been a faint trace of depression. I had not seen him since I had left him reading in the smoking-room after saying "good night." I had come up again at the request of Mr. Robinson as I was on the point of entering my cabin.

Mr. Robinson bore me out, and in his placid, semi-deferential way, explained that there had been nothing hurried or excited in my manner.

"But," said Mr. Kling, "here is a man found shot on deck. Somebody must have done it, and he must have done it with a pistol. You can't shoot a man with your finger you know. I was sitting in my chair until the first-officer called me, and I didn't see a single soul but you. Did you see any one? And are you sure you heard nothing?"

"My friend," I said, "Mr. Kozu himself must have passed from the smoking-room to the fore part of the deck, but there is no mystery in the fact that you did not see him. He must simply have walked up the other side of the ship. And as for some one having shot him, may the explanation not be equally simple? He could have shot himself, and as he fell dropped the pistol overboard."

Mr. Kling's importance of manner subsided like a popped bag; and he sank into a crestfallen silence. The Captain took a hand at questioning the crowd; but he elicited no relevant information. Presently he said:

"That will be all tonight, ladies and gentlemen. The purser has a list of your names. If we want any further testimony he will let you know."

The crowd filed out, obviously relieved and yet half disappointed at so tame a conclusion to their excitement. I got a signal from the Captain and remained behind.

AS THE door closed, he rose from his chair and paced the floor two or three times, evidently trying to determine what line to take with me.

At length he returned to his chair, and in a grave tone said:

"You must appreciate, Mr. Crossly, that you are under heavy suspicion. By your own statement the man must have been shot in the time you were going from the deck to your cabin. And I can not escape the feeling that you know more about the case than you have told. Of course, the suicide theory is only bunk."

"And yet," I answered, "I have been thinking it over and on the whole I believe it will be the best one to adopt."

His face changed and his manner suddenly became sterner.

"I know you, Mr. Crossly. You have sat at my table and our relations have been cordial. I do not believe you shot Mr. Kozu, although I think you know something about the matter. But if there should develop sufficient evidence against you, sir, I tell you frankly, I shall have you placed in close confinement until you can be delivered up to the proper authorities for trial. It may be an unpleasant duty, but I shall perform it."

"Well," I said, "you won't be called on to do it, because I did not shoot him, and I believe you have all the evidence against me you are going to get. But I think you may look for some surprising developments. Indeed, I think you are going to find before long that connection with Markham's death which has been troubling you."

He stiffened with surprise.

"What do you mean?" he cried.

It was as I had thought: Markham's death more than Kozu's had been at the back of the Captain's perplexity.

"Tell me," I asked suddenly, "did you have any reason to be particularly interested in Markham?"

For a moment he studied me from beneath his bushy eyebrows, started to speak, caught himself, and then with a sudden resolution said bruskly:

"Yes, I did. Biddle, our General Manager, instructed me before we sailed to pay particular attention, without appearing to do so, to Mr. Markham and—and—well, some others. Naturally his death has troubled me."

"Yes," I said. "Because in spite of appearances you suspect foul play. These men appear to be simple, undistinguished passengers; you immediately conclude they are traveling in disguise, and because of Biddle's interest that they are on an important and perhaps dangerous mission. One is found dead in his berth. To the world it appears from natural causes, but knowing what you do, you do not believe it; you feel that somehow you have been derelict in your duty of protecting him. You are troubled, when along comes this new development to confirm your suspicions and add to your mystification."

He sat staring at me with concentrated attention.

"You are right, Mr. Crossly. I did feel as you have described about Markham. There is something going on about me. I feel it, but I can't put my finger on it. How in the devil did Biddle expect me to protect these men without taking me more fully into his confidence than he did!" Suddenly he banged the table with his fist. "Just give me a clue to things. I see you know something. I'll show them who is boss of this ship!"

His small, brown eyes were burning like coals, and his red cheeks, shot through just below the surface with tiny, blue veins, seemed literally aflame.

"What I know is only surmise," I said, "but I promise you that if by tomorrow you haven't gotten at the bottom of things, I shall tell you whom I suspect."

He whirled in his chair, without replying. His glance fell on the package. With a bull-like movement, he tore off its wrappings, and then sat gazing sheepishly at the queer little object which lay exposed in his hand. It looked like a brush, an unusual little brush, with a back about the size of a half dollar, and the bristles, which were perhaps something more than an inch in length, covering a space in its center about as large as a ten-cent piece.

"What do you suppose this is?" he asked curiously, turning it over in his hand.

I took it. The bristles were made of steel, and there was a considerable discoloration at their points.

"Where did it come from?" I asked.

"The doctor got it out of the Jap's hand," said the Captain.

In that moment there flashed over me Markham's obsession and the missionary's actions at the doorway of his cabin. I did not wait to explain to the Captain, as I dropped the thing on his desk.

"For God's sake come with me!" I cried, and together we ran to Carter's room.

The door was not locked; the light was still burning, and his clothes were scattered disorderly on the floor. He was lying on his side, his back toward us, his right hand resting on his left shoulder. It took only a moment to discover that he had followed Markham on the long trail.

The Captain stood staring at the body with awe in his face; then suddenly he sank down on the settee and buried his forehead in his hands.

"This ship of mine has become a charnel house, Mr. Crossly," he said thickly. "I'm done for. He was another of the men Biddle mentioned."

I stooped over and picked up Carter's coat from the floor.

As I had suspected, in its pocket there was a revolver with a silencer on its muzzle. I held it out to the Captain.

"I think this explains Kozu's fate," I said.

The Captain looked up quickly as he took the weapon.

"What was it you said about the suicide theory?" he asked.

"Just this," I answered. "Whatever the trouble between them may have been, they have settled their own scores. There is no need to bother about the ends of justice. Nor does it seem worth while to stir up the inquiries and conjectures which would follow a statement of the facts. Let it go as a case of suicide; in that way the matter will be soonest forgotten."

"But will the Japanese authorities accept this version when I make my report?"

"If what I think is correct," I said, "not only will they accept it—they will back you absolutely in it."

He rose and stood looking irresolutely at me, evidently turning over in his mind something which he was embarrassed to put into words. At length he said:

"But you, Mr. Crossly—that meddling fool Kling—he has made that crowd more than half suspect you did it. Won't they believe I am simply trying to shield you?"

I told him that it was his job to convince the crowd; and as he started to leave, I had a flash of inspiration.

"I think you will find the Japanese with whom Kozu shared his cabin will be able to tell you why he shot himself."

It proved to be so. It was a weird story—something about a vision and the voices of his ancestors calling and a lot more flim-flam; but the crowd swallowed it absolutely. Kling even said to me that he had been pained to hear some one remark he had seemed to suspect me, which he assured me was absurd. I accepted his apology with apparent seriousness, although after leaving the Captain's room that night, he had held an indignation meeting on deck and protested that I should be put in irons at once.

THE next day Mr. Robinson did not appear on deck; and upon inquiry of the Captain, I learned that he was confined to his cabin with some contagious disease. I also learned that no one was admitted to his cabin except the doctor, while the second steward, an American, himself prepared and carried to the patient his meals.

Nothing further happened until the night before we reached Nagasaki, where I had determined to disembark and finish my journey overland.

When I went below to my cabin that night, I noticed the third-officer leaning in the doorway of the purser's cabin, with his face turned down the corridor which led to my stateroom. He returned my greeting but did not change his position, and I felt his eyes upon me as I turned into our passageway. He had every appearance of having paused for a chat with the purser, but I could not escape the feeling that he was standing there for a purpose.

It was no surprise, therefore, when half an hour later there came a soft knock at my door; the handle turned and Robinson entered. He was as composed as usual, and his sickness had left no traces of any kind in his face.

He beckoned me to the settee directly under the porthole and so furthest from the wall which separated my cabin from the one adjoining; while he himself drew up the small folding-chair opposite me.

"I shall not apologize, Mr. Crossly," he began, "for intruding upon you, or for the favor I am going to ask. I will only say that it will be a favor in a much larger sense than it may seem, and not one to me alone.

"You are planning to leave the ship tomorrow, I believe, and go by rail to Pekin. Do not, I beg of you, do so. Continue at least to Kobe; from there you can get the night train for Shimonoseki. It will mean a day or two longer, but that very fact will withdraw any suspicion from you."

He paused for a moment, pondering, before he continued:

"No, I am sure none has been aroused. You were not mentioned in their instructions. When you reach Pekin, I suppose you will call at the Legation. Tell them what happened on our voyage, and give the minister this book with my compliments."

He handed me a copy of a modern novel, which had the look of having been through the hands of several readers—such a book as might have been found lying carelessly on the settee of any cabin on shipboard. It contained several colored illustrations, each protected by a piece of tissue-paper somewhat rumpled. Half of one piece had been torn entirely away. The readers seemed to have attached little value to these blank sheets.

"Tell him," Robinson went on—but here Crossly interrupted himself. Never mind what he said; it has nothing to do with the story.

However, to get back to business: when Robinson had finished what he had to say, he laid his hand on my knee.

"You will do it, Mr. Crossly? I can count on you?"

Before I could reply, for of course, I had no choice but to accept the mission, there came the sound of rapid footsteps down the corridor, followed by the deep voice of the third-officer.

"Good evening, you are looking for some one?"

There was a pause, and then the answer in a thin, conciliatory voice in which you could feel the smile.

"I do not speak well English. I only walk, look ship."

A moment later the steps passed on.

At the sound, a peculiar expression came over Robinson's face—it was not fear, it was not challenge—perhaps resignation will describe it as nearly as any word of which I can think, although that gives you no sense of the poise and self-control it showed.

"You see, Mr. Crossly, what I am asking of you," he said, "and why I took the precaution of a watchman. I did not want my visitor to find that I was calling on you."

I felt suddenly hot.

"Look here," I cried, "you are not going to sit quietly and let these beggars get you. Come on, I'll stick by you—we'll show them!"

He smiled slightly, a patient, unhurried smile.

"No, Mr. Crossly, I leave the ship tomorrow. Nothing matters except the message. As long as I play them on, they will not suspect you. Carstein would have the three of us together, although I advised against it. Poor Markham, and Carter, who all his life never learned the meaning of the word fear. It's not brawn but cunning you want. But after all what is life but self-sacrifice in the service of others, and who would refuse the greatest sacrifice of all?"

He rose to his feet and held out his hand.

"Good-by, we may meet in Pekin or elsewhere. If not, good luck!"

As I took his hand, I felt beneath his placid manner the sense of a great, an indomitable force, the all-compelling force of unquestioning purpose based in perfect sincerity. He may have seen some reflection of this in my face, for he pressed my hand and with another smile, added:

"I am taking the fight into the enemy's territory, but they will find I do not consider it a hopeless cause, I can assure you."

Well, that's all. I got through without mishap, fulfilled my mission and attended to my own business. I have not heard of Robinson since; he did not show up in Pekin while I was there. But somehow, in spite of that, I can't escape the feeling that he can beat them out. My success made it unnecessary for him to complete his journey; and he is a man who would do nothing without reason.

CROSSLY ceased speaking and stretched his long legs toward the fire.

"Did you find out what the stuff the Japanese used was?" I asked.

"No," he said, "I didn't. But it was one of the narcotics, probably some subtle refinement of opium. Funny that it should take hold of the system with a shock which gave you the sensation of being touched, isn't it, and that Kozu could have acquired such perfect control over his muscles?"

"The mysterious East," I said.

"The unscrupulous East," he answered with a shrug.

GOLD AT SEA

A THREE-PART STORY, CONCLUSION

by NORMAN SPRINGER

Author of "For Tricks that Are Vain," "For Ways that Are Dark."

SYNOPSIS—After chief engineer *Donald McNeil* refuses to ship on a blind voyage, though offered a fortune by *Judson Haffner*, shipping agent, seconded by *Captain Dacy*, he stops on West Street to watch the loading of the liner *Mauresubia*, said to carry a cargo of fabulous value. While at the dock he rescues a girl's purse from two thugs. She rewards him with her name, *Mary Morrison*, the information that she is to sail for England on the *Mauresubia*, and a rose.

McNeil treads air for hours. Then he visits a Brooklyn wharf-saloon in answer to a second offer from *Dacy*. He is shanghaied and awakes aboard the cargo steamer *Ormsby*, bound, according to *Captain Dacy*, for a British man-of-war with supplies. Believing the story, *McNeil* accepts the chief engineer's berth. He soon notices queer things. The boat is grossly overmanned by a gang of sea-ruffians, among whom are the notorious *Hot-Scotch Henderson*, first mate, and *Dr. Farley*. Discipline is lacking. All hands seem to have a common interest which they carefully keep from *McNeil*.

At night *McNeil* is held up in his room by *Dooin*, a little detective from the Department of Justice, a stowaway aboard the *Ormsby*, who has been hiding in a life-boat. *Dooin* quickly convinces *McNeil* that *Dacy* and his crew are playing some bigger game than mere contraband running. *Oakes*, the wolf of Wall Street, he says is with *Haffner* and *Dacy* in the plot. And he shows the chief engineer that they must work together or they will go over the rail together, once *Dacy* has succeeded, since dead men's tongues are still.

The British destroyer *Wasp* is captured by *Dacy*, while *McNeil* looks on helpless. The crews change boats and the *Ormsby* is set adrift, disabled. *McNeil* takes command in the engine-room, rather than die. Here he has as assistant, a German navy officer, *Werner*, and he soon learns *Dacy's* plan: to capture the *Mauresubia*, with twelve millions in gold aboard.

Dooin is discovered aboard the *Wasp*. Claiming he was a former officer's flunkey, he induces *Dacy* to let him help *Turk*, the negro cook.

Dooin and *McNeil*, learning that *Podd*, the wireless-operator, is a cocain fiend, steal the latter's "dope," and plan to force the fellow to send a message by tempting him with secret promises of "coke."

The *Mauresubia* is easily overcome, and the gold transferred to the destroyer. *Dacy* also brings aboard a girl whom *McNeil* learns is the Captain's very dear friend. They meet. It is *Mary Morrison*. She scorns the chief engineer, believing him a pirate. Later *McNeil* sees her in *Dacy's* arms.

XIV

ALL that night the *Wasp* ate up the knots in her dash to the southward. Hour after hour the revolution counter in the engine-room told the story—thirty-seven knots and better.

All that night I waged a battle with myself, and lost.

Throughout long hours I stood by the throttles and struggled to dam the mysterious and welling flood within me. Throughout longer hours I lay in my darkened room and tried to cow my heart with my reason.

For I knew what had happened to me.

Every drop of blood that pulsed so hotly through my veins bespoke my fierce longing. I loved the woman.

It had come to me that instant I had lingered in the ward-room door and cast a backward glance over my shoulder, to see Mary in Dacy's arms, and her face lifted to his. It had pervaded my consciousness with all the sudden force of a lightning shock, and I had reeled dizzily below, overcome by a sickening sense of disaster.

It is a strange and terrifying experience to have your soul shaken by a woman. To lie with your fists clenched, fighting futilely to stem the tide-rise of love, while your blood riots, and sweet and bitter unbidden thoughts race through your mind.

I loved her; yet who and what was she I loved?

"She is pure and noble; your presumption is sacrilege!" my heart cried. And the jealous devil in my brain mocked: "She is Dacy's sweetheart, his mistress, perhaps. She is an evil thing in a beautiful dress."

And then a wild, unreasoning rage would sweep over me. I could feel Dacy's throat between my fingers, and his life ebbing in my tightening grasp. I could hear the woman's pleas, and I gloated upon the pain in her voice.

The gust would pass by and leave me panting. Again would begin the duel between brain and heart. Ever the heart won, and the longing mastered me—fierce, passionate desire to hold her in my arms, to fondle her, to dominate and force her to acknowledge my mastery, to bow before her whims, and render her abject service.

So passed the night. At four o'clock I went on watch again, heavy-eyed and unrefreshed. The fight was over; my heart was master.

But if I were at peace with myself, it was a bitter peace; for Mary Morrison's strange intimacy with Dacy seemed to indicate how *her* heart pointed. And though I surrendered to the all-pervading sentiment, I could not still the mocking of my mind.

"What do you know of her, or she of you?" I told myself savagely. "You have barely spoken to her a few times. You are acting like a silly fool!" Reflections which were harshly true, but which could not quiet the tumult within me.

But later in the morning, when I had been relieved and was hastening to my room, there occurred that which for the nonce banished amatorial thoughts from my mind.

An inquisition was proceeding in the ward-room, and I paused in the doorway to observe the scene. Grouped at the head of the table were Dacy, Farley and Podd, and confronting them was Dooin's submissive figure and the burly form of the negro, Turk.

I directed my gaze towards Podd, a most miserable Podd. His appearance shocked me. Dooin's prophecy that the unfortunate drug fiend's features would be changed by a night of abstinence was more than fulfilled.

Podd's face was like marble for pallor. The muscles of his lips twitched. Through his bulging eyes stared a soul in torment. His nervous fingers writhed continuously up and down and across his coat front. He was following the conversation with a tragic intensity.

"His room was entered and the box taken," Dacy was saying.

"Strike me blind, if't were Hi, Guvnarh," said Dooin.

"Ah ain't got no use foh dat kinda jag," was Turk's comment. "Ah likes mah lil drink, but Ah nevah takes no dope."

"Well, these men are doubtless telling the truth," said Dacy to Farley. "If his dope was really stolen, it is probably in the forecastle now. Some of those fools forward may use the stuff."

"No, there are no dope users forward," answered Farley. "I can tell from a man's appearance if he uses drugs, and Podd is the only dope fiend upon the ship."

"How about McNeil?" said Dacy, noticing me standing in the doorway. "But, of course; it is needless to interrogate him."

"Yes, if he saw the stuff he wouldn't know what it was," replied Farley, casting an uncordial look towards me. "We searched McNeil's room without success. We have searched everywhere without success. Podd must have hidden the box himself and forgotten the place."

Podd opened his mouth in a despairing wail.

"No, no, Captain! It has been stolen from me. Oh, my God! I must find it!"

"Do you think he might do such a thing?" inquired Dacy of Farley, ignoring Podd's interjection.

"Yes, that would be a typical trick for a drug fiend," said Farley. "They do strange things when they are coked up. It would be like him to hide the stuff upon himself.

He must have done so—nobody else upon the ship uses the stuff. Why should any one steal it?"

"When did you take your last dose from the box?" he added, turning to Podd.

"Yesterday morning," replied Podd. "I put a couple of sniffs in my pocket, and didn't have occasion to go near the box until last night. All night I have had a yen. It grows. My God! I'll go crazy! It has been stolen, I tell you! You can not think I would put myself in this hell!"

"You don't know what you may have done while under the influence of that drug," retorted Farley. "I am a doctor, and I know. You are not responsible. I have noticed you several times during the past few days—you have been overdosing yourself."

Podd dropped into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

"What surprises me," continued Farley to Dacy, "is the fact that not a particle of morphia or cocain is to be found in the medicine-chest. One would suppose that a war-ship would carry a plentiful supply of those drugs for anesthetical purposes."

"He will have to get along without the stuff," said Dacy. "Brace up, man," he ordered Podd contemptuously. "Good heavens! Use your will power. Another twenty-four hours and you will be able to poison yourself as much as you please."

"He has no will power," said Farley. "The drug has stolen it from him. Here, Podd, I'll give you some more of that laudanum. It will not soothe your yen, but it may quiet your nerves a bit."

He stepped to the medicine-chest, opened it and produced a bottle. He procured a spoon from the table and poured out a sparing dose of the reddish fluid. Podd gulped it eagerly.

"More!" he pleaded.

"No, your heart is rotten," said Farley, relocking the chest. "Another dose would finish you. Go to your bunk and try to sleep."

Poor Podd bowed his haggard face in despondent resignation and lurched from the room.

During the conversation I had advanced to the table, seemingly intent upon a meal, though my keen interest was for the situation. When Podd departed, I seated myself and prepared to breakfast upon the cold food on the table. Farley turned to Dacy and remarked, evidently apropos of a previous conversation—

"Then I suppose I may tell the boys you will allow them a little refreshment, Captain?"

"I don't like the idea very well, doctor." Dacy frowned.

"It is subversive of discipline to give them liquor."

"They deserve a little leniency," urged Farley. "Just a nip around—not enough to affect them."

"All right, have your way," assented Dacy. "This is a British Navy ship, so there is plenty of the stuff on hand. Turk may take a bucket of grog forward—not more than a pannikin apiece.

"Remember, Turk, not more than a pannikin apiece!" he addressed the negro.

"Yes, suh, Ah undahstand suh," said Turk.

Turk nudged Dooin, and the two of them disappeared within the pantry regions. Farley departed to the deck, and Dacy, after a turn or two up and down the room and a remark to me upon the continued fineness of the weather, followed after him.

I SPENT the greater part of the morning and the early part of the afternoon wandering aimlessly about the decks and lounging in the ward-room. Twice during the day we raised distant sails, and each time Dacy slightly altered our course and we sped away from the stranger. I noticed from the position of the sun that the *Wasp* was bearing in slightly for the coast.

Twice I met Podd wandering restlessly about. He was a pitiful spectacle. The poor devil was rapidly going to pieces. I recalled his own words to me, "A million maggots feasting upon your brain," and I could almost see the million-fanged monster of his vice, feeding upon his terrible craving.

Keenly interested though I was in Podd's condition, it was not to observe him that I stayed from my bunk and denied myself needed rest. I longed to see the girl again; it was in the hope of encountering her that I spent ambulant hours. But she seemed determined to keep to the seclusion of her room, and I finally despaired of a meeting. Then, when she did come, I was unprepared.

I was sitting in the empty ward-room, when I heard a soft, "Oh!" from behind me.

I looked up and found her at my shoulder.

She was staring at my upturned palm, stretched over the table, My hand held the withered remains of the red carnation.

"Oh!" she repeated. "You saved it! I wondered if you——"

She stopped, her white cheeks suddenly rosy. Somehow, without conscious action, I got to my feet.

"You remember the flower?" I said. "You wanted me to save it—you are glad I treasured it?"

"I—I" she evaded. "I have come to apologize to you. Oh, can you ever forgive the horrible things I said to you? I did not understand—I did not know how you came to be here until Roger told me. It hurt to think of you as one of these others. I had thought of you——"

She stopped again in pretty confusion. My heart gave a great bound.

"You thought of me?" I cried. "You dreamed of me as I dreamed of you!"

She retreated before my impetuous advance, and regarded me with wide eyes and parted lips. The mad longing to reach out and crush her in my arms almost overpowered me.

"You dreamed, too?" she whispered.

"Girl," I said, "I love you!"

She quivered as if the words were a blow.

"You—jest," she faltered.

"It is truth!" I cried.

"But we—you—we are strangers."

"Our hearts are not," I declared.

"No, no! Oh, this is madness!"

I seized and imprisoned her hands—warm little things that fluttered and then were still within my grasp.

"I love you, Mary Morrison," I told her. "I do not know why. I can not explain or apologize. My love is stronger than I. I am but a penniless boor, yet I love you. You are my woman—my mate!"

All the life seemed to leave her face. She withdrew her hands from my grasp and buried her face in them.

"Oh, I wish I were dead," she said miserably.

"Forgive me—I have offended you!" I cried with contrition.

She shook her head negatively.

"Tell me—has that dog Dacy harmed you? Tell me, girl!" I cried harshly.

"No, no! Oh, do not talk like that!" She raised her head, and I saw her great eyes were sheeny with unshed tears. "Oh, believe me, your Captain Dacy is not so evil as you think."

"And you defend him," I muttered, my silly jealousy in my voice. "He has placed you in this horrible position, and you defend him."

"I am in no danger," she answered. "No, no, do not think so. I am safe."

She moved towards the door, and I followed her.

"Girl, I don't know who you are—nor what you are to Dacy," I said. "I don't care. I love you. You—do you care?"

For a long instant she met my gaze, her face white, her eyes become brilliant. Then her cheeks crimsoned and she looked away.

"I—I care," she said faintly.

She turned and rushed from me, and a second later the door of her room closed behind her. I stood transfixed to the spot by the power of her parting words. She cared!

XV

LATE in the afternoon I went on watch again, with a singing heart, though troubled mind. Von Werner, with whom I had barely exchanged a word since the day before, greeted me with a flow of language. He discoursed lengthily upon the vagaries of marine engines. I saw with half an eye he was sparring for an opening, so I waited patiently.

"Haf you heard how der young lady vas?" he blurted at last.

"What business is it of mine?" I answered gruffly.

His words implied gossip. I knew the kind of talk that was undoubtedly being bandied between the foul mouths of the crew.

"*Nein, nein!* You nod understand me. It vas for her safety I ask."

He spoke earnestly. During the past day he had lost much of his former jauntiness. His shoulders drooped a little, and his face was careworn. He had a kindly, rather gentle face, had Von Werner.

"She seems safe enough," I said a little bitterly, perhaps. "Dacy is looking after her comfort."

"I think nod dot Dacy will harm her," he said. "He vas nod dot kind. But der rest—dey haf got drink, und I like it nod. *Und Ralder—ach, schweinhund!* He look at her, und he talk."

I ripped out an oath.

"What did he say?" I demanded.

"*Nein, nein!* I say nodding to make for trouble. Dere vas no need. You vas a gentleman, dot is why I speak to you. I vas here to help der *vaterland*, und nod to injure women. If danger threatens der young lady, I would give mineself to guard her."

Impulsively I thrust out my hand.

"And I, too!" I cried. "We will stand together."

"*Ja*, together," he echoed, his face alight. "But only to help der young lady," he added. "I will do nodding against der expedition—dot vas for der *vaterland*."

Von Werner left, and I commenced to think of the eventuality he hinted at. Was Mary in danger? She had said she was not; she feared nothing. Dacy was guarding her, and Dacy was master.

They were not pleasant thoughts for me. What right had Dacy to cherish her? She was my woman. She had said she cared. I choked upon my choler as I imagined Ralder's evil, leering face, and the ugly words I knew he must have spoken.

I reviewed the situation as dispassionately as I could, and only sickening fear was my reward. For what was Mary but a prisoner, and her captor a murderous cutthroat? What was I but a prisoner, my fate as uncertain as that of the woman I loved, and myself powerless to intervene in her behalf? Even though Dacy guarded her now, what would happen when the *Wasp* reached a destination, as she soon must? What was the mysterious bond between the two?

Dooin brought me my supper.

"There is going to be hell popping soon," was his opening statement. "They are boozing up there."

I had already noticed that the two oilers on watch were skipping about their work with a briskness foreign to them. Their faces were flushed, and remembering Von Werner's words and Dacy's order to Turk, I knew they had had some liquor. Not much, but enough to make them slightly tipsy.

"Are they boozing up forward?" I asked.

"Yep—and there will be something doing over it I think."

He told me that Farley had persuaded Turk to evade Dacy's orders and serve additional rounds of rum to the men without Dacy's knowledge.

"Turk is ory-eyed now; I put him to bed beneath the pantry sink. Just before I came down here, Farley broached a fresh barrel of rum and smuggled a five-gallon tin full of it forward. There is slathers of rum on the ship, and Farley is handing it out to the gang."

"But where is Dacy?" I asked.

"He's so taken up with that skirt he isn't paying attention to business. He's been visiting with her all afternoon."

The words cut me like a knife, but I passed them by.

"Your friend, Henderson, is on the bridge," continued Dooin. "He's pretty well keyed up. Ralder is boozing, too. They all are except Farley. None of them drunk yet, but getting that way."

"But what is the object?" I asked. "Farley is no fool. Why is he evading Dacy's commands?"

"That's the point," said Dooin. "He's working some slick move. I don't know what it is, but knowing him by reputation, I should say he has something up his sleeve that Dacy don't know about. And say," he continued excitedly, "I think I've found out where we're going. I crawled into that air-pipe this afternoon and hunched along till I was able to play "Peeping Tom" on Farley. He and Ralder were holding a sort of consultation in Farley's room. I couldn't hear what it was about—the noise from your blamed engines was too great—but I did get a few words and they seemed significant. Do you know of a place called Bodie Island?"

"Bodie Island!" I exclaimed. "Sure—everybody knows Bodie Island. It is a place on the North Carolina coast. There's a lighthouse there."

"Well, I think Bodie Island is where we are bound for. I heard Farley tell Ralder, 'We will meet the *Oriole* at Bodie Island.' I happen to know that Wilbur Oates has a yacht called the *Oriole*. Don't that seem to clinch it?"

"Bodie Island—they couldn't choose a better place," I said, "if they are going to meet some other ship and transfer the gold. It is a desolate, forsaken strip of beach thereabouts."

"It is the place, all right," affirmed Dooin confidently.

"If it is, we can't be far away from it," I told him. "Taking our speed and course since we left the *Mauresubia*, we can't be more than a few hours' run from Bodie

Island, at the most. We'll get there tonight."

"Then I've got to get busy with Podd," he said. "Oh, he is coming along nicely—walking circles around himself, batty as a loon. He's ripe to work upon."

"But it is all guesswork," I said.

For the first time Dooin showed a glimpse of the strain he was under.

"I know it is," he said. "It is a long shot, but we have to take it. It is our one chance. Good Lord, Mac, don't you realize our position? You don't for a moment suppose that this crowd will allow us to get away to blab what we know. When they are ready to leave the *Wasp*, you may be sure they will reckon with us. They'll leave us behind with our throats slit."

"Yes, I realize that," I said. "But I'm worrying about that girl, Dooin. What will happen to her? We must think of her, too?"

"Huh! Don't worry about her," he retorted. "She's all right. Dacy will look after her. I wish our skins were as safe as hers is."

He dodged the wrench I threw at him, and fled for the deck.

ABOUT eight o'clock a bell from the bridge suddenly commanded the slowing of the engines. At half-speed we ran for some fifteen minutes, and then came the order to stop.

I brought the engines to rest. Dacy's voice came through the speaking-tube.

"We are going to lay by for a couple of hours, McNeil. Keep a full head of steam and be prepared to start at a moment's notice."

I communicated the orders to the fire-rooms, admonished my oilers to stay watchful at their tasks and mounted to the deck.

The dusk of twilight had disappeared, but the night was bright with stars and an early moon. I gazed about eagerly, but we had made no landfall, nor was any light to be seen. The *Wasp* lay motionless upon a deserted sea. But on board there was life in plenty. It seemed to me, as I climbed through the engine-room hatch, that the very air was alive with subtle, sinister suggestions, though, of course, this was but the strain and the sleeplessness of the past days.

The decks were a patchwork in the night light, alternate silver and black. Forward, upon the forecastle head, I could see dim bulks moving about. From forward, not very loud, came laughter and a snatch of song. When I drew nearer I saw that the sounds of revelry came through the open ports of the forecastle, the door of which was closed.

I looked up at the bridge, but it seemed deserted. There was something in the air, an uncanniness, a subtle whisper of evil to come, that made me restless and fearful.

Through the open door of the lighted chart-room over my head came voices—Dacy's voice roundly cursing, and Farley's soft tones expostulating.

"By Heaven! I'll cut that nigger's heart out!" cried Dacy.

"No, no, Captain, it was not Turk, I assure you," came Farley's smooth, unemotional accents.

"Then how did they get the booze?" came from Dacy.

"They discovered it beneath a bunk—a jugful of it. Worden confessed to me. This is an English warship, you know—some of the former crew were saving their whack. It is all gone now; you got the last of it."

The voices sank to an indistinguishable murmur, and I turned away aft.

As I neared the splotch of light that marked the cabin entrance I became aware of a figure seated upon the quarter-bitts. A hoarse, cracked voice commenced to hum a chantey, "Sally Brown I Love Your Daughter," when I approached. It was Hot-Scotch Henderson, drunk as a lord.

"Hello, Mac, old scout!" he hailed me as I reached the cabin ladder. "Goin' down to see the ladies? Ho, ho, you don't want to interrupt Ralder—bad man, old Ralder."

"What's that?" I demanded sharply, as something of the meaning of his jargon struck me.

"Skipper thinks he's cute," he rambled on. "Thinks he'll keep us dry—fooled him. Thinks he's got bird all safe. Ho, ho! Ralder steals a march."

A nameless fear clutched me, and I started to descend the ladder. From below came Von Werner's voice.

"*Nein, nein!* Get oudt—you vas drunk! I will nod allow!"

A curse and a thud followed the words, and then a woman's scream.

I took the steps at a single bound. For an instant I paused, then I saw red.

For the door of the Captain's cabin was

open, and through the open door I saw Mary Morrison struggling in Ralder's arms, matching her puny strength against his burly brutishness. Von Werner lay a crumpled, unconscious heap in the passageway. In a red instant I saw this, and Ralder's expression of dismay as I dashed forward and leaped upon him.

I have no connected memory of what happened during the next few moments. I was mad. I only know that blows fell upon me that I minded no more than one minds the slaps of a child. I only know that I battered the evil, red face before me, while Mary Morrison crouched wide-eyed and breathless against the bulkhead. Ralder was a big man, my own size and weight, but my rage made naught of his efforts.

I had him upon his back in the passageway, my hands about his throat, squeezing out his life, when reprieve came to him.

I was clutched from behind and dragged from my prey. Through the fading red mist of my fury I became aware that the passage was filled with men.

Dacy and Farley were before me. Von Werner and a sobered Henderson were holding me by the arms. Ralder was struggling to his feet, his face a fearsome mess from the beating and choking I had administered. Mary was by Dacy's side, anxiously scanning my face.

"And he dared!" Dacy was saying.

His jaw was set, and his eyes were gleaming with the same ferocity they had shown the time he came to my succor in the *Ormsby's* engine-room.

"He broke in the door," replied Mary. Then she pointed to Von Werner. "That man tried to stop him, and was knocked down. He—he tried to kiss—oh—and then Mr. McNeil came——"

She was trembling so violently she had to clutch at the wall to keep from falling.

Dacy turned his gaze upon Ralder. Utter panic crept into the fellow's eyes.

"Come," Dacy then said to Mary.

He placed his arm about the shaken girl and supported her into her room and closed the door behind them.

"—— you!" hissed Farley. "What have you done, you fool?"

But Ralder was incapable of speech. He stared at the closed door behind which was Dacy, and his bruised lips twisted and writhed but were soundless. A terrible fear was in his eyes; his nerve and his drink-given boldness were fled. Suddenly he turned and lurched up the ladder out on deck.

Farley, also, after a hesitating step toward the closed door, went up the ladder; and Henderson, with a sober, worried mien, followed him. Shaken though I was, I sensed their fear.

"You vas hurt," said Von Werner to me.

Not till then did I become conscious that I had been stabbed, that my left arm was dripping blood, that a long-bladed knife lay upon the deck where I had pommeled Ralder.

I stripped my coat, opened my shirt and revealed a cut upon my shoulder. It was just a deep scratch, and Von Werner bound it with the sleeve from my shirt.

The door of Mary's room opened and Dacy appeared. His face was set and red.

"You are hurt?" he cried, as he saw me wriggling gingerly into my coat.

"Just a scratch," I answered.

He spat a black oath.

"He'll pay," he said.

"No, no, not that, Roger!" Mary stood in the doorway with a white, terror-stricken face. "Not that, for God's sake, Roger!"

Dacy gave no heed to her plea. He strode to the ladder and disappeared out upon deck. Von Werner silently followed him.

"Oh, can't you stop him?" cried Mary, coming toward me. Then she noticed the blood upon my sleeve and gasped with an anxiety that thrilled me, "You are bleeding—you are hurt!"

"I am all right," I told her. "Come, dear, calm yourself. It is all over."

She did not protest, indeed she seemed grateful, when I put my arm around her and soothed her. But she was not comforted. Her face was blanched with horror, an expectant terror.

"He will kill him!" she cried. "Oh, stop him! Do not let him take a life!"

I attempted to reassure her, thinking she was hysterical.

"No, no, you do not understand!" she exclaimed. "Roger will kill him, his face showed it. Oh, he is terrible when he is like that!"

I tried to stem the tide of her excitement, but upon the heels of my words came confirmation to her fear. Through the open hatchway, from the deck, came the sudden, sharp bark of a revolver.

XVI

WE BOTH cried out as the shot put a reverberant period to the silence. As with a single impulse, we sprang for the ladder and stumbled out into the night.

We came upon a scene of tragedy.

In the center of the broad, clear strip of deck abaft the funnels stood Dacy, his back half turned to us. His figure stood out with cameo distinctness in the bright moonlight, tense, menacing, dominant. A revolver glittered in his hand, and from its muzzle curled a wisp of smoke.

And at his feet lay a huddled, formless bulk, still, yet terrifying. Mary gave a little choked cry at the sight, and shrank closer to my side. Instinctively, for I could make out no features, I knew I was gazing at Ralder's lifeless body.

To one side of Dacy stood Von Werner and Henderson, the gleam of steel in their hands, too. The three of them confronted a common menace.

In the black shadows cast by the funnels upon the port deck, was a moving blotch. The blotch was a little blacker than its surroundings, and resolved itself into arms and legs as its parts moved near the edge of the moon's rays. It was the crew, or a portion of them, and from them came a sibilant and unfriendly murmur.

Dacy was speaking, and from the midst of the shadow came also the sound of Farley's voice in nervous jerks:

"Silence! Stop it, you fools. Keep quiet!"

"And any other man who dares such an act will meet with the same fate," Dacy was saying. His voice was low, and unexcited; his manner the more lethal for its very calmness. "For the remainder of the trip, the cabin hatch is a deadline upon this ship. The man who crosses it without orders will be shot dead."

He ceased speaking, and the savage growl came again from the living, shifting shadow. Above this sound rose the crisp tones of a man blaspheming.

"—— ——, he was my mate!"

There was the fleeting sheen of steel in the darkness.

"Ah—would you!" cried Dacy; and whipped up his arm and fired point-blank at the cursing voice.

A scream was the echo to the shot. Dacy bounded forward, with Von Werner and Henderson at his heels, and Farley leaped backward out of the mass and into the moonlight. He too was armed, and promptly trained his gun upon the gang.

There was a scuffling of feet, and the blotch disintegrated. There was a glimpse of figures fleeing across the bright patches on the deck, one of them staggering as he ran. Dacy and his henchmen plunged after them, and a moment later there came shouts and curses from the forecastle forward.

The moon-bathed square of deck was deserted, save for the dead man sprawled upon his face. Mary moved restlessly at my side, and the weight upon my arm increased.

From the starboard side, around the aftmost funnel, a white, ghostly figure dodged into sight. I spied it with a superstitious thrill. It flitted towards us across the deck, and as it drew near I recognized Dooin.

"Come on, Mack," he whispered, while yet a few feet from me. "This is our chance. The bridge is deserted, and I have Podd all ready. I can't handle him alone. Come on!"

But just at that instant I was in no position to heed the little man's words. For I had become suddenly aware that it was only the strength of my encircling arm that prevented Mary from falling to the deck. Without a sound, she had collapsed.

I gathered her up in my arms with a sharp stab of apprehension, and unmindful of the twinge it gave my wounded shoulder. She lay so still, her face was so waxen in the moonlight, that I had the momentary, hideous thought that she was dead. And then the gentle lift of her bosom, as she breathed, reassured me.

"Come on," urged Dooin. "What have you there—oh, lay her down. This is our chance, and I need your help."

"What shall I do? What is wrong with her?" I demanded wildly, oblivious to his entreaties.

He stepped close and inspected my unconscious burden.

"She's just keeled over—fainted," he said. "Lay her down—she'll come around all right." I turned towards the ladder. "All right, dump her in her bunk," he hissed after me. "We'll wait for you behind the forward smoke-stack. Hustle, for Heaven's sake!" And as I started down the ladder, I heard the light patter of his feet as he raced forward again.

The door of Mary's room still swung open, and I carried her in there and deposited her upon the bunk. She lay with her eyes closed and her red lips half parted, altogether beautiful and disturbing. I glared wildly about for assistance. I was unskilled in feminine vagaries, but I had gleaned from occasional novels that water was the thing I wanted.

There was a carafe upon the table. I seized it and sprinkled some of the contents upon her face. Immediately I was rewarded by seeing her long lashes quiver, and then her eyes opened.

I dropped to my knees beside her.

"You are recovered?" I said. "Oh, girl, you gave me a fright!"

I took her hands in mine. They were icy cold, and I commenced to chafe them. Suddenly a racking shudder shook her body, and she raised herself upon her elbow.

"Where—where is he?" she asked. "Where is Roger?"

I felt the jealous stab her mention of Dacy's name always gave me.

"Don't worry, he is all right," I told her. "He is in no danger; they are afraid of him."

She sat up, and withdrew her hands from my grasp.

"Thank you, I am all right now," she said. And then, her eyes suddenly widened. "Oh, that awful Thing—that awful Thing in the moonlight!"

She covered her eyes with her hands as if to shut out the visioned horror.

Blunderingly I tried to soothe her. I thought of Dooin, and his entreaty that I hurry.

"You are safe now," I told her. "There is no danger. I must go—I am needed on deck."

But at that she clung to me like a frightened child.

"No, no, do not leave me!" she cried.

I sat down beside her and comforted her, and straightway she buried her face in my shoulder and burst into a storm of weeping.

It is terribly disconcerting to have a girl cry upon your shoulder. It makes you feel like a guilty brute, even though you are perfectly innocent of the cause of her distress. Mary's outburst filled me with a panic that increased when all my attempts to assuage her grief resulted in her clinging the tighter to me and weeping the harder.

I was in despair. And then, as abruptly as they had commenced, the sobs ceased. She drew away from me, and I, somewhat abashed, realized that I had been murmuring wild endearments in her ear.

Tears glistened on her cheeks and her mouth quivered, but she had control over herself. Her cheeks reddened as she returned my gaze.

"Oh, how weak I was to break down like that," she said. "Please forgive me; I am ashamed of myself."

Dooin's word to hurry to him was dinning in my mind.

"You are all right now?" I inquired. "I must return to the deck. Do not worry. You will be safe now."

I held her hand as I spoke, and she gripped my paw nervously at my words. She was still badly shaken but she had herself in grip again. Stooping quickly I pressed my lips to her hand, and left her side. As I closed the door behind me I saw her press the hand I had kissed to her bosom, and her eyes gave me farewell and a promise.

ALL was quiet as I slipped through the hatch and again gained the deck. The night seemed breathlessly still, and as peaceful as a benediction, were it not for that sinister figure sprawling face downward upon the deck. I listened a moment, crouching by the hatch. Not a sound came from forward.

Quickly I scurried across the lighted square of deck. I slipped forward along the starboard side, keeping in the shadow cast by the funnels. A soft whisper hailed me as I came abreast the middle stack.

"Here, Mac, here!"

I strained my eyes toward the voice, and made out a dim form in the lee of the forward stack.

"Thought you would never get here," said Dooin, as I joined him. "Everything is lovely—they are all busy searching the forecastle for booze. There is nobody on the bridge or in the chart-room. We can make it all right."

"Where is Podd?" I asked.

"Here," he indicated with his foot.

I looked down, and almost at my feet was what appeared to be an inanimate bundle of clothes. But at the sound of my voice, the heap stirred into life, and the wireless operator arose to his bony length.

"Have you got it? Did he bring it?" he demanded in a shaking voice.

In the gloom his face looked like a death's head, and his glowing eyes gave me a most uncanny sensation.

"Yes, yes, he has it," remarked Dooin.

Podd reached out and grasped me by the wrist. I was astonished at the strength and tenacity of his grip.

"Now, now—give it now!" he begged.

"Not till the job is finished," said Dooin.

As he spoke, Dooin pressed into my disengaged hand some paper. From the feel I instantly recognized the pellets of cocaine from Podd's cigar box.

I thrust the stuff into my pocket and wrested my other hand free from the dope fiend's fingers. But he immediately transferred his clutch to my coat-front.

"Let me see!" he pleaded. His voice was hoarse with desire.

"Show him one," said Dooin.

I drew one of the pellets from my pocket and thrust my arm out of the shadow into the moonlight, so that the twisted paper dangled in plain sight before the poor devil's eyes. With a hoarse, bestial gurgle he flung himself upon me, clutching at my outstretched hand.

The attack was so sudden and unexpected that I gave ground. Silently we wrestled, and I was astounded by the man's strength. It was the strength of madness, but there was no method in it. He merely clung to me and plucked frenziedly at the hand which held the powder.

"Stop it, or we will dump it all into the sea," Dooin hissed commandingly.

The words seemed to reach Podd's intelligence, for he ceased the struggle as suddenly as he had begun it, and crouched back against the stack, panting and moaning.

"That's why I needed you, Mac," was Dooin's low-voiced comment. "I knew that I would be no match for that nut if he suspected I had the stuff. I had to pretend that it was in your possession. And you must stand by to manage him."

"Are you satisfied?" he added, turning to Podd.

In answer, Podd ceased his low wailing and abruptly commenced to creep along the deck toward the bridge. We followed.

"He knows just what is expected of him," Dooin informed me. "You accompany him into the chart-room and dictate the message. Then hand him the dope and beat it quick. They'll be after us as soon as they hear the noise. We can only send one message, but that may be enough.

"But will Podd really do it?" I asked. "He's playing traitor."

"You saw him. He's crazy for the stuff. A dope fiend hasn't any scruples—he will do anything to get the stuff and satisfy his yen."

"But what will the message be?"

"What can it be? We must take the chance. S.O.S. for Bodie Island. Say the *Wasp*, with the *Mauresubia's* gold, is at Bodie Island. And then chuck him the dope and beat it quick."

"But what use—Podd will tell."

"Not he. Dacy would kill him, and he knows it. I have coached him; he will pretend he is crazed and irresponsible. He is in deadly fear of consequences, but his craving overmasters his fear."

"But what is to prevent him bulling the message?"

"I have told him you know the international code—can read messages being sent. Order him to use it. Oh, I know it is a long chance. The *Oriole* may pick up the message and take warning, but—*hist!*"

Our rapid interchange had brought us to the bridge ladder. The door of the forecastle, just ahead of us, was closed, but the ports were open and the light streamed forth in thin shafts from them. We could hear the murmur of voices from within.

"They are all in there," whispered Dooin.

We scurried silently up the ladder to the bridge, where Podd already was. The door of the chart-room was open, and the room was lighted, but the wing of the bridge where we stood was in shadow. A warning hiss from Dooin, and as one we dropped to our knees, out of sight behind the weather-cloth.

The door of the forecastle below us had opened, and a broad beam of light had gushed forth. I peered beneath the bottom of the weather-cloth. Dacy and Henderson stepped out of the forecastle; and after a second Von Werner and Farley followed, the latter closing the door behind him.

The quartet were conversing, and the voices reached us.

"It is—strange," remarked Dacy, "that only half of them are drunk and the rest cold sober."

"I suppose the bunch that found the stuff didn't think there was enough to go around," said Farley.

"Humph! Where did you get your booze, Henderson?" grunted Dacy.

"From Ralder," said Henderson in an anxious voice.

"Blast that nigger!" swore Dacy. "It was he who handed it out! I suppose he is stretched out drunk somewhere. I'll have a word with him that he will remember! How is that rat I shot, doctor?

"His shoulder is smashed," replied Farley. "He is out of it. It is a bad business, Captain; both Ralder and Worden were good men."

"I would kill you just as quickly for the same cause," was Dacy's savage statement.

"No chance. A woman is not my weakness," said Farley. "But it was foolish to bring a pretty flapper like——"

"Shut up!" grated Dacy. "If you have occasion to speak of that young lady you will speak with respect."

"Oh, all right, no offense meant. I only——"

"Now that those dogs are quieted, we may as well get under way," interrupted Dacy. "We have no time to waste if we are to make Bodie Island and transfer the stuff before daylight."

"No, the sooner we get there the better," said Farley. "I suppose the yacht is already there waiting for us."

"We are only a couple of hours distant; we'll be there before midnight," said Dacy. "But come aft with me for the moment; I mean to find that nigger and question him. There is something strange about this booze racket."

The four of them moved away aft along the port side, and I listened to the retreating clump of their feet upon the deck-plates.

"No time to lose," whispered Dooin. "I'll stay here on lookout. If I whistle, made a break for it. Leave Podd—he'll make out."

I got to my feet and slipped into the chart-room. Podd followed me. The fellow's movements were mechanical, like one hypnotized; but his feverish eye and twitching lips proclaimed him alive to the situation.

He stepped to the switch and threw it into the sending end. I drew the handful of cocaine pellets from my pocket and placed them upon the table in plain sight. Podd made an involuntary start towards them, but with a great effort controlled himself. Great beads of sweat glistened upon his forehead. He stood by the apparatus, waiting, his eyes fixed upon the drug.

"Are you ready?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Then send this in the international," I instructed. "No trickery, now—I know the code."

He nodded again.

"All right, take this:

S. O. S.—S. O. S.—*Wasp* at Bodie Island—Bodie Island—Have *Mauresubia* gold——"

At my first word Podd splayed his fingers upon the keys, and the juice leaped through the gap with a thunderous crackle, it seemed to me. As I reached "gold," a quick, sibilant whistle checked me. Podd stopped, and I heard a shout from the deck.

I leaped for the door, and as I passed through, I had a sidewise glimpse of Podd throwing himself with animal-like ferocity upon the little pellets I had left upon the table. Dooin had vanished. Along the port side came the pounding of feet. The forecastle door was flung open.

I dropped to my knees, crawled swiftly to the starboard ladder and slid down it to the deck. I was in the shadow, and safely gained the shelter of the funnels.

Feet raced along the port side. Several forms dashed past, opposite to where I crouched. I heard Dacy's voice in shouted inquiry. From the bridge came exclamations, and Podd's shrill, protesting wail.

I slipped aft, hugging the shadow. I crept around the third funnel and plumped into a man's arms.

"Eh, what—McNeil!" was the startled exclamation in Hot Scotch Henderson's voice. "By ——! Treachery——"

My clutch on his windpipe throttled his outcry to a gurgle. I thrust him backwards against the stack.

He struggled furiously. His right arm whipped up, and I caught the sheen of a gun. I clutched his wrist and twisted it fiercely, and the weapon clattered upon the deck. I shifted my grip from his throat to a full neck-lock, and pressed him to me. He clawed frantically, and I felt the breast pocket of my coat rip out.

And then it ended suddenly, and without tragic intent upon my part, God knows. I knew I was fighting for my life, but I had no desire to kill the man, only to overcome him.

But as I crushed him to me, exerting my full strength upon the stranglehold, I felt his head suddenly give. There was a little crunching snap, and he slumped in my arms as if a bullet had struck him. I lowered the sagging form to the deck. His head lolled grotesquely upon his shoulder. I knew he was done for—that his neck was broken.

There was a sick, sinking feeling in my stomach, but I had no time for reflection. Action pressed. I heard voices and footsteps approaching from forward.

The gun gleamed where it had fallen upon the deck. It caught my eye, and impulsively I picked it up. It was a heavy service revolver, and I thrust it between my body and waistband.

I cast a swift, reconnoitering glance across the space between myself and the cabin hatch. It was empty. Ralder's body had disappeared, and only an ugly spot, black in the moonlight, told where he had fallen. The voices from forward sounded nearer. I sped swiftly across the open square of deck.

In safety I gained the hatch and plunged down the ladder to the passageway below. Mary's door was open, and she stood before it with an alarmed and questioning face. Her eyes widened as I appeared, and she started towards me with an exclamation I did not catch.

I waved her back, with a finger to my lips to enjoin silence. Through the hatch came voices. I gained the entrance to my own room, flashed a reassuring glance to Mary and swung my door shut behind me.

I fell panting into a chair, my scattered wits swimming. The thought of that sickening crunch when Henderson's head fell awry was uppermost in my mind. The thought was nauseating.

From the passage without came the dull rustle and tramp of men, and the murmur of their rough voices. The sounds receded, and I knew they had entered the ward-room.

Their passage forced me to a fevered reflection. They had Podd, without doubt. They had taken him into the ward-room. But Dooin? Had the little man got clear? Would Podd talk? A multitude of questions raced through my mind.

And through the turmoil of thought ran an exultant note. For we had succeeded! We had flung into the night a far-spreading cry for help, an appeal that must find lodgement and response. Come what might to Dooin or me, there was a chance for the girl.

A chance for the girl! It was thought for her, rather than faith in Dooin, that had impelled me to help in the rash act. Did Mary want the chance? She said not. She trusted to Dacy. My heart contracted at the thought, the bitter thought of her relations with Dacy. What was she to him? I cared not what she was. She loved me, and I loved her.

The struggle with Henderson had disarranged the shirt-sleeve bandage around the cut upon my shoulder. I became conscious that the blood was streaming down my arm and dripping upon the floor. The sight banished my mood and brought me to my feet. I opened my coat and discarded the old wrapping, and made shift to bind the wound afresh with a folded towel.

I was rinsing the stains from my hands when there came from without sounds that were pregnant with meaning. A great voice shouted "Captain! Captain!" and then there was the trampling of men's feet descending the ladder and traversing the passage, and last, a faint chorus of exclamations.

I listened with a quickened heart. I tiptoed to the door and pressed my ear against it. Intuitively I knew what was the ado, visioned the scene without—the still warm body of Henderson being carried into the ward-room, and the startled cries greeting its appearance.

For several moments I stood by the door, tense and agitated. I could hear nothing but a murmur. The suspense grew intolerable. Swiftly I reasoned that my safest move was to appear in their midst, convey an impression of surprise and ignorance and then return to my duty in the engine-room.

Mentally I rehearsed my part—an air of boldness and frank, indifferent replies to questions. I looked at my reflection in the glass to assure myself that my bearing was composed.

The bulk of Henderson's gun, thrust in my waistband, caught my eye. I transferred it to my hip, and it still bulged. Nowhere about the suit of thin dungaree could I conceal it so that it would not be noticeable to a discerning eye. I reflected that it could do me little good in the event of unpleasantness in the ward-room, and with reluctance thrust it beneath the mattress of my bunk.

I opened my door and peered into the passage. It was deserted; Mary's door was closed. I stepped forth, composed my features to as near an air of nonchalance as I could assume, and crossed to the ward-room.

XVII

DACY'S voice was raised in inquiry, and there was an excited buzz in the air. Instantly I gathered the details of the scene—Farley standing by the open medicine-chest, a bottle in his hand; Dacy at the head of the table; Von Werner standing impassively by Dacy's side; a member of the crew facing Dacy.

But it was the gruesome spectacle which caused the excitement that claimed my first attention.

The table had been cleared for half its length by roughly sweeping the food and dishes aside. Upon the cleared space reposed Henderson's body. The fixed light in the ceiling shed strong rays upon the ghastly heap, making the clay seem shrunken within the clothes, accentuating the horrid angle the head strayed from the trunk, showing the tight-clenched hands.

Beside the body, Podd sat in a chair. He sat rigid, clutching the table-edge and staring straight before him. He was evidently oblivious of his surroundings. The pupils of his popping eyes were enormously dilated and were filmy; and despite its cadaverous contour, his face seemed swollen. Above the talk rose his stertorous breathing.

I looked about for Dooin, but the little man was not to be seen. I was greatly relieved. His absence presaged that Podd had not spoken, that he had not been discovered.

"And I stumbled across him crumpled up on the deck, in the lee of the funnel," the sailor was telling Dacy, when I grasped the drift of the conversation being carried on. He was the fellow who had fired the midship gun when the *Mauresubia* was rifled—the navy deserter.

"I'll get to the bottom of this; there is some deviltry afoot!" snapped Dacy.

There was fury in his voice, yet strangely enough I seemed to catch the ghost of a smile playing beneath his mustache as he contemplated the dead man upon the table.

Farley's eyes had been upon me since my entrance.

"Here is McNeil, now," he purred. "Question him—he may throw some light upon this matter." His voice was soft, as ever, but there was a wealth of malignancy in his tone.

Dacy nodded to me genially.

"Where have you been during the past fifteen minutes, McNeil?" he demanded.

"In my room," I lied in as cock-sure and offhand manner as I could muster. "I have been bandaging my shoulder, and minding my own business."

Dacy nodded as if satisfied.

"You see," he said to Farley.

"You don't seem to be troubled about the death of both your deck-officers!" Farley exclaimed.

He spoke the words accusingly. The air was electrical with the clash of wills.

Dacy shrugged his shoulders. I was sure he was smiling.

"Why worry?" he said. "One of those devils forward had a run in with Henderson. His life went to satisfy a grudge."

"Nonsense, I can account for the actions of every man awake at this time!" retorted Farley.

"Oh, can you?" remarked Dacy with sarcastic interest. "That is rather strange."

Farley cast a furtive, sidelong glance at the Captain. There was a fleeting, startled expression on his face.

"No, no, I didn't mean that literally," he hastened to add. "But it is absurd to suppose that one of the crew did this to Henderson. Why, he was popular with them. This man—" he favored me with one of his hate-ridden glances—"must know something about it."

Dacy did not reply to this. He remained lost in thought for a moment, his eyes roving from the still figure upon the table to the equally rigid Podd.

"Where is that little Cockney?" he exclaimed suddenly. "Has anybody seen him?"

"In the pantry, no doubt," answered Farley.

"What is his name—Dooin?" said the Captain. "Dooin!" he called aloud.

To my astonishment the reply was prompt, coming through the partly opened door of the pantry in a weak and tremulous voice.

"Aye, aye, Guvnarh, 'ere Hi be!"

The owner of the voice materialized an instant later, standing in the doorway, a very limp and shaken Dooin who regarded us timidly and showed evident terror at the sight of the dead man on the table.

"Where have you been keeping yourself this evening?" demanded Dacy sternly.

"S' 'elp me, Hi ayn't done nothink, Guvnarh," whined Dooin, cringing before the Captain's look. "Hi been in my bunk all hevening, sir, Hi 'arve."

"Humph!" grunted Dacy. He turned to Farley. "What do you think?" he asked.

"That little fish knows nothing!" the doctor snorted contemptuously. "He hasn't nerve enough to tackle a louse. It is this man—" and he indicated me—"who must be responsible. He is large enough, and a fighting brute. Good Lord, think what happened! Neck broken—snapped clean; face congested from choking!"

"Humph," remarked Dacy again. "Can you lift Podd out of his dream?"

"No, he doesn't respond to the restorative," said Farley. "It is serious for him, too. He has taken enough dope to lay out a dozen men, and his heart is bad."

"No matter," responded Dacy indifferently. "We have no further need of him. But that message he sent——"

"Bosh!" interrupted Farley. "He discovered his dope and it went to his head. Overdose—common occurrence. He couldn't have sent a coherent message if his life depended upon it. Why, he was eating the stuff when we grabbed him."

"No, and he knew nothing that could interfere with our plans," commented Dacy. "Well, we have had an exciting evening—eh, what!"

His exclamation was caused by Podd himself. For a sudden gleam of intelligence had dissipated the film upon his eyes. He shuddered violently. Suddenly he arose to his feet with jerks, as if his joints were hinges. It was a repulsive sight as he leaned his cadaverous face over the true cadaver, and I watched him with a thrill of impending disaster.

I was in his direct line of vision. He bobbed his head toward me with great effort. He slavered at the mouth.

"He—he—he!" he gibbered.

"What does he mean?" cried Farley.

Podd struggled to speak, but not another sound issued from his writhing lips. Slowly his face froze again to its stony, set expression. He swayed and pitched forward upon his face across Henderson's corpse.

We all surged toward him. Farley and the navy man eased him to the floor. Farley kneeled by his side.

"Gone," he stated.

"Gone!" I echoed. "Do you mean he is dead?"

He nodded, looking up at me with eyes that stabbed through his glasses.

"Not quite, but soon. Rotten heart—too much dope."

I held myself in hand with an effort. I felt sick. Another death, and for which I was at least partly responsible! Their utter callousness and the part I had been compelled to play filled me with disgust, the more fierce because I had to conceal it. A clean, fair fight, even though there be a death, leaves no regret. But this black business was different.

"What did he mean by indicating you?" demanded Farley of me, as he rose to his feet.

"There is something wrong here, Captain," he added, turning to Dacy. "Podd meant something—McNeil has been doing something, just as I told you."

Dacy regarded me speculatively, but his gaze was not hostile, as was Farley's.

"No, no, you are overwrought, doctor," he said. "You, yourself, remarked that no dependence could be placed upon Podd's statements."

"Here, you," he addressed the sailor. "Pick Podd up and lay him on the divan, there. Then call one of your mates from above, and get this carrion out of here. We have no more time to waste—we must be getting under way again."

The navy man obediently leaned over and gathered Podd in his arms, as if he were a sack of flour. He lugged him to the divan and dropped him upon the cushions.

The sailor advanced toward the table. Farley was scrutinizing the corpse.

"Wait!" he exclaimed suddenly.

He lifted one of the clenched hands, forced it open and grasped something.

"By ——! Look at this!" he cried.

He held up his hand. I repressed a gasp, and involuntarily clutched at my missing breast-pocket. For Farley's hand held a piece of cloth—of dungaree cloth, and I alone was dressed in dungarees.

I FELT myself the target for all eyes. The deserter leaped to my side and forced my arm down from my breast. The bare, ragged space where the pocket should have been was disclosed.

"Oh, yes! He was in his room minding his own business, was he!" cried Farley triumphantly. "I knew he had something to do with this. He fooled you nicely, Dacy, with his help for your moll——"

"Shut up!" snapped Dacy.

"He killed Henderson!" declared Farley. "By ——, I'll get him!"

I was rooted where I stood by the overwhelming suddenness of it. Farley's hand plunged toward his hip.

"Stop that!" ordered Dacy, towering above the other. "I'll attend to that, myself."

Farley subsided, cursing fearfully in a steady stream. Dacy wheeled upon me. His voice was menacing, yet there was not in his eyes the ferocious gleam I expected.

"You have been up to some sort of game, McNeil," he said. "You know what I promised would happen to you if you made any move against the expedition."

My heart pounded, my head swam dizzily. I glanced out of the corner of my eyes toward the pantry door. Dooin had disappeared. I was a rat in a corner. I cursed Dooin for his cowardice. I cursed myself for leaving Henderson's gun behind.

"I always keep my promises," continued Dacy's smooth voice.

He whipped his hand in sight above the table-edge, and I stared into the black tunnel of an automatic.

"*Nein*—not dot!" burst out Von Werner.

"Unpleasant, but necessary," continued Dacy.

"Roger! Roger! No, no!"

The cry, shrill and terror-stricken, came from behind me. My heart leaped.

"When I count three," Dacy was saying, his eyes never leaving mine. "One——"

There was a tremendous impact of sound upon my ears. Dacy tumbled backward upon the divan, as if some giant, invisible hand had swept him from his feet.

I wheeled about, my ears ringing from the explosion. Mary Morrison stood in the doorway, a smoking counterpart of Dacy's revolver in her hand. She was staring round-eyed at the spot where Dacy had been standing an instant before.

She gave a choked, hysterical cry, dropped the gun and dashed forward. The paralysis of surprise was upon us all. Not a man moved as she sped across the room.

She flung herself down beside the divan. We crowded forward. Dacy was sprawled upon his back. A stream of blood welled from his hair and stained the cushion and his cheek.

"Roger! Roger!" called Mary.

Despair and horror were in her cry. She daubed futilely at the red stain with her bare hand. She leaned over the bloodied face and passionately kissed the lips.

It was a suddenly materialized Dooin and Farley, who dragged her away. She staggered back against the table, and Farley leaned over the Captain.

Mary swayed toward me.

"He's dead—he's dead!" she gasped.

But the whole world seemed tumbling about my ears. She called him—she kissed him—she loved him!

"You lied!" I told her hoarsely. "You said you cared, and you lied! You love him!"

"I love him," she echoed, and her whispered words were like hammer-strokes upon my brain. "I love him—and I cared. I cared enough to kill him." She plucked at her throat as if she were suffocating. Her voice rose in a queer, strangled scream. "I killed him!" she cried. "My own brother—*I have killed my own brother!*"

"He is not dead," spoke up Farley.

He stood up. His face was working, and the fancy struck me that it was disappointment he was biting upon. But it was a subconscious impression—I was stunned by Mary's words.

"He is only creased," continued Farley. "He is coming around already."

At the words Mary flung herself upon the prostrate form and lifted the Captain's head. Distinctly, I heard him sigh.

"But you—you shall pay me, now!" Farley rasped at me.

He backed away from me, his right hand behind him. My wits were swirling, but I sensed the menace in his voice and glare.

"*Nein, nein!* I will nod haf it so!" came from Von Werner.

The German leaped in front of me, covering me with his own body.

"You may nod shoot," he said to Farley. "Der Captain, yes—nod you."

Von Werner's hand was in his coat-pocket, and the garment was thrust forward, a most suggestive bulk. I noticed Dooin, bending over the girl, but watching Farley out of the corner of his eyes. And Farley, though he choked upon his rage, and an evil blasphemy slid from his lips, heeded the authority in Von Werner's voice. His hand left his hip empty.

A movement and an exclamation abruptly focused our eyes upon the divan. Dacy was getting to his feet. His face was messed by the flow from his wound. He swayed unsteadily for an instant and grasped at the table-edge. His arm supported the drooping, half-conscious form of Mary; and when he spoke, his voice was steady and suave.

"You lose, doctor," he said to Farley.

To Von Werner he ordered,

"Take McNeil to his room and lock him in."

XVIII

I WAS like a man in a dream. I suffered the German to take me by the arm and lead me away, and the ward-room receded before my eyes like a blurred picture—Mary clinging to Dacy's arm and hiding her eyes from the horror on the table; Dacy, gory and smiling; Farley's face of baffled rage; poor Podd's form, tumbled upon the far corner of the divan.

Von Werner told me something, but, although I saw his lips moving, I had no idea what he was saying. Presently, I found myself standing in the center of my own room, staring at the locked door and listening to Von Werner's faint, retreating footfalls.

For I was stupefied by Mary's cry. It dinned in my mind, and drowned all other thoughts. "My brother—my own brother!"

Her brother! Dacy was her brother. I paced the room, saying the words over and over again to myself. A great joy pervaded me.

Her brother! A hot shame flooded me at the recollection of my ignoble suspicions. It was so simple. What a dunderhead I was not to have suspected it before!

Brother and sister! The explanation of those mysterious visions of her which Dacy's personality had called into being. It was the resemblance they bore one another, not resemblance of feature, but the intangible, subtle blood-likeness.

And the glorious part of it—she cared! She loved me. She loved her brother, but she had shot him to save me. It filled my heart and mind, that wonderful thought of her love.

But my rosy dreams flitted abruptly when the ship began to tremble as the engines started. The vibration increased rapidly, and in a few moments the *Wasp* was under way at full speed.

I became alive again to mere mundane affairs, and a stabbing disquiet assailed me as I realized my position. I looked at my watch. Half-past ten; two hours since I had brought the engines to rest; two hours packed with significant incident, replete with the violent meetings of men; two hours, and two men dead and a third dying.

How would it end? What was the meaning of my imprisonment, what the reason for Dacy's friendliness and mercy? They knew I had killed Henderson. They suspected I had something to do with Podd's escapade.

Farley hated me and believed me dangerous. But Dacy? Had Mary's influence, her magnificent courage, actually won me my life? Or had Dacy merely spared me until a handier time when she would be unable to interfere?

And there was the impression I retained of Dacy and Farley fighting a duel of wits. Were they at loggerheads with each other? Was it merely callous indifference that enabled Dacy to look upon his first officer's dead body unmoved—yes, with smiles?

I found no answer to these questions, and scant comfort in reflecting upon them. But, indeed, I couldn't keep my scattered wits upon them for long; they would fly off at a tangent. Mary was the hub of my consciousness.

But on a sudden thought, I repossessed myself of Henderson's revolver from its hiding-place beneath the mattress. A six-chamber Colt's .38, it was, loaded and in good condition. I slipped it through my waistband and felt more comfortable as its weight assured me I would not be struck down without at least a chance to put up a fight.

The *Wasp* slowed down; I felt the gradual lessening of the vibration. The ship began to lift and pitch to a choppy sea, and I knew we had entered uneasy, shoal waters. A half-hour or so of this and then we stopped, backed and stopped again.

I looked at my watch and found it to be just midnight. Heavy feet trampled on the deck overhead. I decided we had reached Dacy's destination, Bodie Island, or wherever it was.

I pressed my ear to the crack between the door and the jamb. I could hear nothing. I hovered about the ventilator, expecting Dooin's voice to hail me at any moment, for I was convinced that the little man would get word to me in the same manner he had done before. But time dragged and he did not come.

Footfalls passed and repassed above my head. I visioned the little square boxes being hoisted from the after compartment. I waited a long while by the door, and finally did hear some persons descending the ladder and entering the ward-room.

I could hear nothing more. I was in a fever of impatience, but I had to wait while two dreary hours dragged out their length.

"Are you there, Mac?"

It had come at last, a penetrating hiss. I reached the ventilator-opening with a single bound.

"Yes, yes, is that you, Dooin?"

"Yep. Here, catch!"

The end of a steel bar protruded through the off-shoot pipe. I grasped it and pulled it through.

"I have to beat it back, quick," Dooin's voice followed the bar. "That thing is to jimmy your door open with. The Dutchman has the key to your room in his pocket, and I can't get hold of it. Can you spring the lock with that?'

"Yes, easily," I answered.

"I'll give you my gun," he added.

"I have one—Henderson's," I told him.

"Good! I'll probably need my 'gat' myself."

"What is going on outside? Where are we?" I asked.

"They are transferring the gold. We are lying near the beach in a little bay, and there is a yacht close by. They are sending the gold to her. There is a lighthouse up the line."

"Bodie Island light, sure," I said, when he added that it was a fixed, white glare.

"Wilbur Oates is on board," he continued. "Came on board soon as we stopped. He is holding a confab in the ward-room with Dacy and Farley now, and I am serving them with booze. I got to get back before they miss me."

"But what shall we do next?" I asked. "Am I to break my way through the door at once?"

"No. Wait until you get my signal. I'll rap on the door. There is a chance for us to get to the beach—I am watching for the opportunity to grasp it. The boat that Dacy used to board the *Mauresubia* is in the water, by our stern. They are not using her; the yacht's launch and boats are carrying the gold. Can you swim?"

"Yes," I said.

"Well, my plan is to watch our chance and flop over the side. Then we'll swim to the small boat and beat it for the beach."

"How about Mary? I'll not go without the girl," I stated.

"She is coming. I've been talking to her. She knows how things stand. That is why we must reach the boat. You and I could swim for it, but she couldn't. Say—you made a hit there, Mac! She is some pippin!"

"What did they do with Henderson?" I asked.

"Over the side—Podd, too. They don't bother much with funerals on this ship. Did you really croak Henderson?"

I swiftly recounted my battle with the mate, and its sudden, fatal ending.

"Good work!" was Dooin's comment. "Pity it wasn't Farley. Did you notice how Dacy took it? He wasn't sorry it happened."

I commenced to tell him my nebulous suspicions.

"I know—something between Dacy and Farley," he interrupted. "Something going on that doesn't appear on the surface. Well, I have to get back before those sports get thirsty again. You stand by to jimmy open the door in a hurry."

DOOIN'S voice stopped speaking. I heard a soft grunt and then the rustle as the little man wriggled and dragged himself through the pipe on his way back to the storeroom.

The trampling on the deck overhead had ceased. A great quiet was upon the ship, a nerve-racking, sinister silence, to my excited mind. I could plainly hear my watch ticking in my pocket.

I examined the bar I held in my hand. It was an ordinary nail-puller that Dooin had probably discovered in the storeroom, a piece of half-inch steel, two feet long, with a curved claw on one end and the other end flattened to a chisel edge—a strong tool and one that would give a powerful leverage.

I tried it upon the door and found that the flat end would easily enter the crack between the door-edge and the jamb, just above the lock. I was confident that a moment's work would burst open the door.

I took up my station by the door and waited and listened, the bar ready for use. The minutes dragged like hours. I was in a fever of impatience. It had been about half-past two when Dooin left to return through the pipe, and it could not have been more than three when the summons came, yet the interim seemed an age.

Suddenly I heard the clump-clump of heavy footsteps ascending the ladder to the deck. I thought it was Dacy, from the weight of the step. I tingled with expectation and pressed my ear against the door.

I waited breathless, expectant, and tried to stare through the oaken panel. I heard the soft patter of feet upon the passageway carpet, coming nearer. Abruptly, from just opposite, came a faint, choking, gurgling cry, and something struck the door with a dull thud. A faint scratching started against the outer side of the door. It commenced breast-high and descended slowly to the floor.

It was like an animal pawing for admittance. It was a horrid sound, and I followed its zigzag descent, with my heart in my throat and my scalp prickling. I crouched, tense and ready. A dead silence followed.

Several moments I waited. No further sound came from the passageway, and I hesitated to use the jimmy. I feared to make an abortive attempt and thus spoil Dooin's plans. That thump against the door could not have been Dooin's signal, I reasoned. But that gurgling cry, and that ghastly scratching told of tragedy.

Suddenly there came from the deck the sharp crack of a pistol-shot. A scattering volley of shots answered it. Heavy feet rushed by overhead and I heard faintly distant shouts.

Coincidentally came a pounding upon the door, and Dooin's voice crying—

"Quick, Mac, quick!"

Frantically I pried on the bar. The door gave. I exerted my full strength, the bar bent, the lock burst. The door flew open so precipitately that I tumbled headlong into the passageway.

I fell across something soft, something squashy that sent a repulsive thrill through me even before I apprehended what it was. Arms grasped me, and I found my feet. Dooin was at my side.

"Now is our chance," he was saying. "They have risen against Dacy."

I was staring at the thing I had fallen across. It was a man's body, a big, fat man, sprawled upon his face—a huge, gross thing in evening clothes. A diamond sparkled from an outstretched, pudgy hand. From between his shoulder-blades protruded the hilt of a knife.

"It is Oates," said Dooin. "Farley did it—waited until Dacy went on deck and then, when Oates was in front of him, he stuck him. Farley is working a double cross. He is leading the crew against Dacy."

That there was trouble on deck was apparent. Through the hatch came the noises of a brisk conflict, shots and shouts, and the sound of men running. Even as Dooin spoke, the sounds indicated that the affray was moving forward.

"Farley is heading a mutiny," added Dooin. "We must make a break for it now and try to reach the beach."

I did not pause to debate.

"Where is Mary?" I asked.

"In her room, waiting," was the response.

I was at her door before he had concluded.

"Mary! Mary!" I called, knocking.

The door swung open, and she was on the threshold. I reached for her, and for an instant she lay in my arms, a sweet-smelling, quivering, clinging bundle.

"What is it? What has happened?" was her frightened demand.

"They are fighting among themselves," I told her.

"Come on!" called Dooin. "Break that clinch!"

He had run to the top of the ladder and spied out upon the deck. Now he hurried to us.

"We haven't a moment to lose," he said. "They are all forward, fighting around the forecastle. The coast is clear for us."

We hurried to the ladder, Mary shrinking close to me as her gaze encountered Oates' body upon the floor.

"Now, listen!" commanded Dooin. "We want to get our program straight. The boat is on the port side. We must get to the side of the ship and jump into the water and swim to it. Miss, when it comes to jumping you mustn't lose your nerve. We will hold you up."

"I can swim," said Mary. "I am not afraid."

I felt a thrill of pride at the firmness of her voice, and gave her a reassuring squeeze.

"I think I have a better plan," I said to Dooin. "What is the matter with me going first, getting the boat and bringing it to a point opposite the hatch. Then you and Mary can tumble right into the boat."

"Fine!" said Dooin. "The girl won't have to get wet, and she can keep all of her clothes on. Can you manage the boat by yourself?"

I was confident that I could. He explained that it was riding to a painter from the port quarter boom.

I pushed ahead of him and reached the head of the ladder. I felt to make sure the pistol in my belt was to hand, and then skipped through the hatch to the open deck.

The false light that comes just before the dawn was paling the eastern horizon. The moon was gone, but the stars were bright. The decks were still a patchwork of light and shadow.

My first glance was forward where the fight was in progress. I saw darting figures about the foot of the bridge, and saw the stabbing flames as revolvers were fired. The shouting had ceased. One side to the combat had retreated to the bridge, and was holding it against assault.

The open space of deck where Ralder had lain a few hours before was still bright in the starlight. And almost upon the very spot where Ralder had died another body sprawled. Forward, near the smokestacks, I saw another motionless heap.

Off our starboard bow, some three miles distant, was the steady, white beam of a lighthouse. Instantly, I knew where we were—at the entrance to Oregon Inlet, on the edge of the Platt Shoals, and a few miles distant from Bodie Island light.

Close to us, on our port side, was the yacht, a white-painted bulk, without lights. A fight was raging on her decks, also, and the sounds of conflict mingled with the uproar from our own decks. I could see nothing of the fighters—only the flame of their shots.

The two ships were lying in a little bight, and the beach was about a half a mile distant, astern. It was just a low black line, and I knew that the shore thereabouts was simply a narrow strip of sand dunes, dividing the ocean from the Albemarle Sound.

My survey had occupied but a moment's time, but an impatient hiss warned me that Dooin was waiting. I leaned over, unlaced and removed my shoes, and spoke to him in the hatch while so doing.

"I'll scull the boat around to the starboard side," I told him. "Then we will be out of sight of the yacht. It is safer."

"All right," he answered. "We'll be waiting on the starboard side."

I started. When I left the friendly shadow of the hatch cover, I had a lighted strip of deck to cross. I took it at a jump, my heart in my throat. But the gang forward were too busied with their row to have roving eyes. I gained the side safely, slipped through the life-lines and dropped into the water.

The *Wasp* stood but a scant six feet out of water, and I made hardly a splash. I arose and struck out strongly, keeping close to the side of the ship.

I saw the whale-boat heaving ahead of me. It took but a moment to reach her, clamber over the gunwale and grasp for the painter. I severed the rope with my clasp-knife and allowed the boat to swing in against the side of the *Wasp*. I was afraid to use an oar until I had rounded the stern, for fear of being seen.

Instead, I clutched at the smooth sides of the destroyer and hunched the boat along, safe in the shadow cast by the big hull. When I reached the sheer stern, I tumbled aft and shipped the big steering-oar with which the whale-boat was provided. In another moment, I was softly nosing along the starboard side.

I whistled softly when I reached the quarter, and held the boat in position with the oar. As an answer to my signal, a length of rope dropped in the boat from above.

"All right, Mac," came Dooin's soft hail. "Stand ready to catch!" And his shadow, athwart the life-line, disappeared.

Standing on the stern-sheets of the whale-boat, I could just peer across the *Wasp's* deck. I saw that Dooin had made fast the end of the rope to the quarter bitts. Dooin himself, as I looked, was just emerging from the cabin hatch, leading Mary.

Forward, the battle between the gangsters had developed into a siege, to judge from sounds. The battle had passed by the bridge, and an attack seemed to be in progress against the forecastle. I could see none of the combatants, the darkness and the bridge concealing them from view. But the shooting was continuous.

Mary and Dooin reached the side. Swiftly, Mary slipped through the life-line, seized the hanging rope and slid down it. She landed lightly. Dooin followed her promptly.

I allowed the boat to drop astern. A moment and we were clear of the *Wasp*. Then I threw my weight upon the sweep, swung our bow to the beach and sculled for dear life.

XIX

MARY and Dooin crouched upon a thwart, facing aft, and as we drew away from the *Wasp* they had a view of her decks, insofar as the darkness permitted a view. But I, standing in the stern-sheets and plying the sweep, could only imagine the scene from sounds, and from Dooin's crisp comment.

We had gone about three hundred yards, when a wild hulloo came to our ears.

"They have spotted us!" exclaimed Dooin.

An instant later, a volley of shots sounded behind us. Dooin seized Mary and forced her body beneath the gunwale.

"They are strung along the side shooting at us," he commented.

I worked like a demon to increase the distance between us and the ship, though indeed we were in little danger, having passed effective revolver range, even by daylight. But I feared some one of them had a rifle. My own exposed position gave me a rather shivery sensation along the spine at first, but an instant's reflection comforted me. I knew we must be merely a rapidly diminishing shadow to those on the *Wasp's* deck.

Then, suddenly, a pandemonium of sound broke out behind us. Shots, shouts, screams! I was consumed with curiosity, but dared not turn from my task. Dooin described.

"They are mixing it among themselves! The other side has made a sortie from the forecastle, and they are scrapping all over the deck. I bet Dacy is leading them!" An instant later he added: "They have stopped scrapping on the yacht. Everything dark and quiet."

The uproar on the *Wasp* died away. Only scattered shots broke the night's silence, and they grew fainter and more seldom as we neared the beach. It could only have been a matter of moments ere we reached the breakers, but it seemed a long time to me.

It was a gentle, tame surf, and I had little trouble in keeping on the crest and riding the combers safely. When we touched the sand, I dropped the oar and leaped over the side. Dooin followed, and picking up Mary in my arms, we ran up on the beach, leaving the whale-boat to take care of itself.

Above the water-line I placed Mary on her feet. We stood silent, all three, and stared across the water.

The two ships were dimly visible, the yacht a white line upon the water, the *Wasp* a black blot. Not a light was showing upon either craft. A deathly quiet was upon them. The conflict had ceased, and not a sound came over the water to our ears.

"One side has come out on top," commented Dooin. "Dacy or Farley—which?"

I had no answer. I felt Mary's body tremble as Dooin voiced the question. My solicitous glance told me she was weeping, though she bravely repressed her sobs. I pressed her shoulders in dumb sympathy. And dripping with sea water though I was, she nestled close against me.

"What now?" added Dooin. "Those sports might follow us. Hadn't we better mosey? They have the yacht's boats to use in pursuit."

We gazed about us. We were on the edge of a desolate waste of sand dunes. The steadfast beacon of the lighthouse, miles away, was the one break in the monotony of the outlook.

"Had we better beat it for the lighthouse?" asked Dooin.

"I don't think we can reach it," I answered. "I am not sure, but I think the lighthouse is off shore. I am not familiar with the geography of this region, but I know the Oregon Inlet is close by. There is a fishing village there. But what direction it is from here, I don't know."

After a short debate, we started tramping along the beach toward the light. There was no sign, so far, of pursuit.

"But walking will keep us warm," Dooin had remarked, and wet as I was, I agreed.

"Don't grieve, dear," I whispered to the girl plodding by my side.

She looked up, and the tears in the corners of her eyes glistened like diamonds in the starlight. Her voice, in spite of her striving, quivered a little.

"I can not help grieving," she said. "It is an old wound opened—a wound I thought was healed. I loved my brother. He was father and mother to me before the trouble came upon us. I had mourned him for dead — and now, this meeting, and the knowledge of the terrible thing he is doing —was doing, perhaps. He may be really dead now."

She shuddered, and I drew her close. In silence we tramped on.

We had gone about a mile, and were upon the curve of the shore at the lower end of the bight.

"Look!" cried Dooin of a sudden.

WITH my eyes I followed the line of his pointing finger. Far seaward, I saw a ray of white light stabbing the sky. It waved up and down.

"A searchlight!" I exclaimed.

"They are coming," said Dooin. "They are coming in answer to our message."

I strained my eyes. I saw a red glow, just a fiery tinge against the background of the night. I knew what it meant. It was the glare from the stacks of a hard-driven ship.

"It is a torpedo craft, I think," I remarked. "She is coming in fast."

We all looked toward the *Wasp*. We could just see her bulk lying motionless upon the water. Her hull hid the yacht from our view. No sound came to us to tell of the oncoming stranger sighted.

"Do you think they have left the *Wasp* and boarded the yacht?" queried Dooin.

I had no answer, and I gazed seaward again. The beam of the searchlight flashed on the water. On the instant came the reply to Dooin's question. Sharp cries came from the *Wasp*, faint because of distance.

"They are still there, and awake," I remarked.

Breathlessly we watched. A silence followed the cries.

Suddenly lights showed on the *Wasp*, burned a second, and went out. The bulk of her hull seemed to diminish.

"She is under way!" I exclaimed. "That means that Dacy is in charge. Farley could not have got her started so quickly."

Then the *Wasp* vanished. She merged into the gloom like a disappearing wraith. The rhythm of her screws reached our ears for a moment and then died away. The yacht, a dim white outline, still held her position.

We watched with quiet, intense excitement. Dooin grunted unintelligible monosyllables; Mary stood rigid at my side; my own heart pounded. We stared into the paling night.

Twice again I saw the funnel-flare of the stranger. She was about two miles offshore, I judged. No answering reflection betrayed the *Wasp's* position, and I knew Dacy was dodging out at moderate speed.

Then suddenly, the stranger's searchlight flashed again. It pierced the sky and lowered to the water. It described a wide semicircle, lighting the sea with a moving stream of light.

Twice it made the arc, and as the second sweep ended, the *Wasp* slipped across the edge of the light and disappeared again, like a black phantom-ship, lost, but only for a moment. The merciless eye of light wavered uncertainly and then centered full upon the *Wasp* and remained there.

The *Wasp* gathered a bone in her teeth as her speed suddenly increased. She was headed straight for open water. About a mile distant, on her starboard bow, was the owner of the light. The pursuer was evidently steaming a course to intercept the *Wasp*. Lights flashed upon her, and I made out her lines. She was a big destroyer, as I had thought.

Rapidly the two ships neared each other. Suddenly, a great flame burst from the ship with the searchlight. We saw the graceful curve of the shell with its lighted tracer. It went over the *Wasp* and dropped into the sea. A moment later, the dull boom of the gun came to us.

"They are gone," I said. "That was a range-finder, and the *Wasp* is within range. And she is faster than the other boat, so the stranger will have to sink her before she slips past."

Mary's grip on my hand tightened. I looked at her with a sympathy, with an understanding of her pain, and fear for her well-being. Her tears had ceased to flow. She watched the scene with a set face and bright eyes, but I knew she was suffering.

"Look!" cried Dooin. "He's going to fight 'em!"

I swung my gaze seaward. The searchlight still bathed the *Wasp*. And with the thrill one always feels for a daring deed, I saw that Dacy had changed his course. He was steaming toward his Nemesis, on a parallel line, and at full speed. The two ships were but a few thousand yards apart.

The flare of a second shot came from the second ship. The shell seemed to burst upon the *Wasp's* amidship deck and there was an exploding flame. The *Wasp's* forward gun spoke twice in reply, but apparently the shots were without effect.

Then came the end in one red moment.

Although we could not perceive the maneuver, the stranger must have come up a bit to bring her broadside to bear. Of an instant her whole side spat flame, and the sky was bright with the white streaks of the shells, like Roman candles.

It was an exhibition of trained men, serving rapid-fire guns. The firing lasted less than a minute, but at least eighteen shots were fired from the battery. The flashes were so close together it seemed a continuous flare. The reports reached us as a continuous rumble.

The shots bunched. They centered upon the *Wasp's* waist, her vitals. The *Wasp* replied to the storm twice with her bow gun. Then—the end.

The *Wasp* seemed to stop short and writhe as if in pain. Her center rose in the air. There was a great burst of flame, and a huge cloud of steam or smoke. When it dissipated the *Wasp* was gone—vanished as utterly as if she had been a picture upon a slate, and a sweep of a sponge had effaced her. The face of the sea was a blank of agitated water.

Down the wind there came to us the great sound of the explosion. It was like the great roar of a twelve-inch gun.

"The yacht!" cried Dooin.

The yacht was gone. So quietly had she slipped her cable and disappeared that we, engrossed with the greater spectacle, had heard no sound. No sign of her met our eyes.

But my scrutiny was rewarded by a glimpse of the fleeting ray from another searchlight, far to the left, and beyond the sand spit that marked the farther boundary of the bight.

"She has gone with the gold," said Dooin.

"She won't go far," I replied, calling his attention to the light. "There is another ship waiting out there. Escape is cut off in either direction, and it will be daylight in a few moments."

We gave our attention again to the spot where the *Wasp* had disappeared. We saw the moving dot of a rowing boat in the white stream from the searchlight. They were searching for survivors, we surmised.

"How about us?" exclaimed Dooin. "We want them to know we are here." He searched his pockets. "Confound it, my matches are lost!"

I thrust my hand into my bosom and drew out the waterproof package of matches I always carry with me. Dooin seized it, with a grunt of satisfaction.

I left Mary's side for a moment and aided the little man. Driftwood was plentiful, wreckage cast far up on the beach by the Winter gales and now dried to a tinder. We collected a great pile, and soon had a roaring fire upon the sand. We heaped the fuel on, and in a few moments our blaze was visible for miles.

We three sat down before the flames and waited. The warmth was grateful to Dooin and me, wet and chilled as we both were. And the fire's cheerfulness was a boon to Mary, also. The dear girl was bearing up bravely under the strain of the night's horrors and privations, but I knew she was in a wretched state of mind.

In the dawning, we could see quite plainly the destroyer. Her searchlight still played upon the water where the *Wasp* had sunk, and we could make out the figures of the men in the boat that was searching over the spot.

Of the yacht there was no sign; but presently there came to us the boom of a gun from over the sand spit. Just a single shot.

"They have caught her," conjectured Dooin, and I agreed.

And then, quite suddenly, Mary began to speak. She was staring into the fire, and she spoke more to herself than to us in a low monotone that was vibrant with feeling. I knew her words brought relief to her sore mind, and I signaled to Dooin not to interrupt. She spoke as if she knew Dacy had gone to Davy Jones.

"He was father and mother to me," she said. "Even if he cared for no one else, he loved me. He was ten years the elder, and was my all while I was growing up. Even before his wife, he placed me. We thought he was dead. We thought he died after the trouble, and we grieved for him. His wife and I are chums. She is with the Red Cross, in England, and I was crossing on the *Mauresubia* to join her."

I pressed her arm encouragingly. After a moment she continued.

"And then he came to life—and in such a manner! I screamed when I saw him on the *Mauresubia*. He swore and made me go down into the little boat.

"Oh, the shock, when I realized the truth. When I discovered it was a colossal robbery, and he the leader. And then you appeared, and I thought you were one of them. I—I wanted to die!"

She paused, wrestling with her emotion, and I murmured gentle endearments over her bowed head.

"But you must not hate him; you must not judge him," she went on. "It was his nature that drove him on; he could not help himself. All his life he was in trouble. No one could rule him, even when a boy—atavistic, they said he was. He cared only for me, and for the urgings of his lawless spirit. He could not help his life—his nature flouted control."

"I know, dear, and I do not judge," I told her. "There are many men like that in the world. You meet them in the outplaces. He was born too late, your brother, a thousand years too late."

We sat silent, Mary and I, staring into the fire. Our hearts were full and close together, closer even than our shoulders, which touched. I think we both forgot Dooin completely.

In the flames I saw my own words curl into a picture. I saw the feral likeness of Roger Dacy. His great body was garbed in ancient dress, a shield was on his arm, a great two-edged sword in his hand. The raven helmet topped his ruthless, smiling face.

"A thousand years too late," I mused. "What a Viking the man would have made!"

It was Dooin who dispelled the vision, and rudely.

"Holy smoke! Look!" he cried in an awed voice.

My mind wrenched back to reality. I looked. Mary screamed and fell back upon the sand. I cried aloud.

For standing on the beach, not twenty yards distant, was Dacy himself, or his wraith. In the weird half-light of the early morning he was an unreal, spectral vision.

Save for the cotton trousers that clung dripping to his form, he was naked. A soaked bandage was twisted turban-wise about his head. He returned our stare, and his great chest heaved.

The movement squelched my superstitious thrill. I realized that this was no fantom, but a living man just out of the water and weary from a long swim.

He came toward us. He paused at the fire's edge and stood looking down at Mary's unconscious form. The flames ruddied him and showed the lines of weariness upon his face.

"Poor girl!"

His soft, muttered words broke the spell that enthralled us. Dooin stirred uneasily, but Dacy's eyes swept to my face and held me transfixed. His eyes glowed.

"I lose. It is Fate," he said in his quiet voice. "Guard her well and cherish her."

Without another word, he turned and started down the beach. There was a stagger in his step.

"Halt!" barked Dooin.

The little man was on his feet, rushing forward, his revolver in his hand. Dacy whirled about.

"Hands up!" snapped Dooin.

Dacy made no move to obey the command. His arms dangled by his side. Dooin paused, some eight feet distant from the other, his weapon aimed.

"I am an officer," he stated. "You are my prisoner!"

I had found my feet by then, and was running toward them. Mary was uppermost in my mind.

"No, no, Dooin!" I cried. "Put down that gun! Leave him go!"

The words were still on my lips when it happened. There was fully eight feet of sand between the two, and Dooin moreover held a gun pointed at the Captain's head. But Dacy suddenly bridged that gap with a single movement of his body, a lion-like leap, so swift that my eye caught but the flash of his form.

He was upon Dooin, crushing the little man in a giant's hug, and forcing up the hand that held the revolver.

There was a blinding flash as the weapon exploded. A tearing, searing agony stabbed me through the breast.

I was lying upon my back on the sand, looking up at the sky. I remember there was a star that was just going out. As a man hears a voice in a dream, I heard Dacy's voice.

"By ——! I am sorry," it said.

Then came a great roaring, and things went black.

XX

FOR a long time things were blurred and topsy-turvy. At times I heard voices. A long ways back, in the beginning, a voice said, "He is built like an ox, with a constitution to match. Otherwise, he would be gone ere now." Somehow, those words seemed to matter immensely.

Another time, a second voice said, "Oh, you must fight—you *must* fight!" That voice sounded like stirring music in my ears. I recognized it, but I could not reach behind it But I know I answered, "Yes, I must fight."

At times I knew intolerable pain. And a cool, soft hand would rest upon my forehead, and the pain would flee. I loved that hand.

And then I opened my eyes and found myself staring at a bare, white ceiling. Gradually, I became aware of an iron bedstead, of a bare wall, and of the mingled odor of roses and disinfectant. I tried to think, but was too tired.

I awoke again to full consciousness. I knew I was in a hospital, somewhere. I knew I was wounded in the chest. I remembered all that had gone before—the *Wasp*, the beach, Dacy, the shot!

It all came to me with a flash, in my awakening moment. An instant later I was staring up at a gray-bearded, merry-faced man who was leaning over me.

"How do you feel?" he exclaimed.

"Fine," I answered, and I was astonished at the thinness of my voice.

He nodded with energetic satisfaction.

"She did it!" he beamed. "Ah, what a nurse—what a nurse! She is much too good to be wasted upon you, young man!"

"Where is she?" I asked; I knew of whom he spoke.

"She is asleep. Why shouldn't she be asleep? Been at your side night and day for two weeks. If she left, you blatted like a calf for its mother. Wore her out—I sent her to bed. Are you hungry?"

I found I was voraciously hungry.

"All right," he said. "I'll send you your dinner—and, if you promise not to get excited, a visitor."

I promised, and he turned away. The door closed. I turned my head and occupied myself with inspecting the bare little hospital room I found myself in.

In a little while a lad dressed in a Navy uniform came in. He carried a very large tray, and upon it was a very small bowl of broth, which he informed me was my dinner. I swallowed it eagerly, and he departed, grinning at my indignant demands for food.

I tested my strength and found myself wofully weak. I could not sit up, though I could move my arms well enough. I waited impatiently for the appearance of my visitor. I thought I knew who it would be, and I was in a fever to see her.

And then the door opened, and Dooin walked in. It was a disappointment, but not a keen one. I gave him an eager welcome.

"Hello, old Cockledoo!" was his cheery response. "I've come to pay you a visit."

It was a rehabilitated Dooin I saw. His impudent smile had returned to his face, and in figure he was sartorially resplendent. His wardrobe hit the eye as a circus-band hits the ear. Nothing retiring about Mr. Dooin's checks, and multi-colored cravat.

"When is Mary coming?" I asked him. "I would like to see her."

"There you go!" he cried. "Leave the poor girl rest. You have had her at your side for two weeks. By golly, Mac, I take my hat off to Miss Morrison—she is a brick! And to think I misjudged her at first!"

He drew a chair to my side and sat down.

"It was nip and tuck with you," he added. "She pulled you through — even the doctors admit it."

"What place is this?" I asked. "What has happened—Dacy, and the gold?"

"This is the Naval hospital, at Norfolk," he replied. "I have only a few minutes with you, so I guess I had better hustle with the news. You were shot through the body by my gun, during the tussle with Dacy on the beach. Imagine an old stager like me being caught like that! But I never saw a man move as quickly as Dacy did when he made that jump.

"I got a crack on the jaw at the same instant, and was knocked cold. When I came around, the little lady was kneeling by your side, stanching the flow of blood and praying for your life in a way to melt your heart. And the rescue party from the *Flusher* was just arriving.

"The *Flusher* was the ship that sunk the

Wasp. I made myself known to the officer in charge of the landing party, and we hustled you and Miss Morrison on board, and started you for the hospital here. Then we started a search for Dacy. Would you believe it, he had vanished! With daylight, there wasn't a place on that sand waste where a chicken could have hidden, but we never got a trace of him."

"I hope he got safe away," I blurted.

"Huh—sticking up for the family, ain't you?" Dooin retorted. "Well, he is safe away, or dead. He never showed up at the village or lighthouse, and there was nowhere but the sea for him to go to. That strip of sand is only two miles wide, separating the ocean from the sound, and Dacy must have gone into the water on one side.

"I guess, Mac, there is some truth in what the little lady told us about Dacy being born without any morals. I've been looking him up.

"His name, of course, is Morrison—Roger Dacy Morrison. He was an officer in the navy, and was cashiered a couple of years ago for beating up his commanding officer and dickering for the sale of war secrets to a foreign government. He disappeared, leaving a devil's own record behind him. It was supposed he had killed himself, but instead he was freebooting around the Far East under various names.

"The *Flusher* rushed you up here to Norfolk, together with two of her own men who were wounded by one of the *Wasp's* shells. After giving up the search, I followed on the *Rhodes*. The *Rhodes* was the other ship you spotted. She had the yacht and the gold in tow.

"Well, when I reached Norfolk I found out how things stood. The *Mauresubia* was sighted by one of our cruisers the same night of the robbery. The news was wirelessed to shore, and of course the newspapers had it that the Germans had turned the trick.

"Meanwhile, the Department was worried over my failure to report, as I knew they would be. They put a couple of the boys on my trail. Your friend, Haffner, was grabbed just as he was leaving town. They held him incommunicado, on general principles. But Oates, it was discovered, had left on his yacht for a sea trip.

"Then came a packet load of wild Englishmen into New York. An Italian liner had taken them off a disabled tramp—the *Ormsby*, of course. They didn't get into the harbor—a British cruiser met them outside and transshipped them—but nevertheless the papers got an inkling of the situation. There were ructions between the British Embassy and our State Department. The boys started to sweat Haffner.

"Then came our wireless. It was picked up at Arlington, and by ships in Hampton Roads. There was a whole flotilla of torpedo boats combing the coast for us within an hour.

"Well, you know what happened. It was not until you were here in the hospital and I had gone to New York that I discovered the ins and outs of the business. For Haffner squealed. It was a tough job, but at last we made him spill.

"As I thought, Wilbur Oates originated the scheme. Oates was in a bad financial hole—he had to have slathers of money. Being a banker, he knew of the shipment on the *Mauresubia*, and he conceived the idea of looting her. He won over Haffner, and they elaborated the plot. He sent for Dacy—Farley was an afterthought of Haffner's.

"The swag was to be divided this way—half to Oates, a million apiece to Haffner, Dacy and Farley. The balance was to be divided among the crew. Oates was to handle it all through his bank, and thus avert any suspicion.

"But this didn't suit Haffner. He and Farley wanted the whole pie, and they planned a double-cross. About half the men were Farley's men. Both Henderson and Ralder were picked by Haffner, and pledged to Farley. They planned to overwhelm Dacy and the men who were loyal to him, escape with the boodle on Oates' yacht, pick up Haffner off Key West and beat it for the Mexican coast. They depended upon Haffner's connection with the Mexican insurgents to see them through.

"They darn near succeeded. Only Farley didn't make allowance for the weakness of his own men—the weakness of vice slaves. Ralder spoiled it.

"I have patched it all out pretty well, and here is where that booze racket that puzzled us comes in. When Farley smuggled the rum into the forecastle, only the men who were loyal to Dacy were supposed to get it. The idea was to get them drunk, and then they couldn't resist the mutiny. Most of them did get drunk. But Farley's men tackled the stuff, too. Ralder got drunk and insulted the girl.

"That gave Dacy his chance. He must have suspected something by this time. He had a double motive in killing Ralder—to avenge the insult, and to remove a danger. He wounded Worden, also Farley's chief man in the forecastle. And when Henderson's body was discovered, he was actually grateful to you.

"Well, the death or disabling of his three lieutenants weakened Farley immensely. But he carried out his plans anyway. What happened after he killed Oates I don't know for sure, but he did lead an attack upon Dacy.

"Dacy won, as we know. I daresay Farley had gone to join Ralder and Henderson by the time we reached the beach. And then came Dacy's finish."

Dooin paused. For a while we were both silent, busied with our thoughts. Mingled thoughts, mine were, of Dacy, and of some one else.

"And that is all for that!" continued Dooin suddenly. "The end of the biggest job I ever bumped into. The gold is back in New York, and Haffner will end his days in prison.

"And now for the good news! How would you like to be rich, Mac? Money comes in handy when a sport has a girl."

"Don't jest with serious matters," I told him.

He chortled in high glee.

"Over in a bank in Norfolk," he said, "there is a nice little nest-egg waiting for you to come and grab it. A hundred and fifty thousand cold simoleons stacked up against the name of D. McNeil."

"What are you saying?" I cried, startled.

"Yep—you get a hundred and fifty thousand. It is a reward. You see, those Bigbugs up in New York got to talking it over and reading my report. They decided they wouldn't miss that much out of twelve million dollars they never expected to see again. So they deposited that much to your account, and added a heartfelt letter of thanks which the doc will show you if you ask him. Those sports figured that you did a whole lot to save the stuff for them, and they are almighty grateful."

I slowly digested this morsel. It was wonderful news. It solved the problem for Mary and me. Dooin beamed.

"Picking out the bungalow?" he demanded.

"What do you get?" I demanded.

"Oh, I still have my little job," he grinned cheerfully.

I said nothing, but I made the vow that half of the windfall would be "stacked up against the name" of Archibald Dooin, very shortly.

"So now you have the straight of it all," Dooin said, after a moment. "And I better beat it before that doctor comes after me with an ax. I was only supposed to stay five minutes."

He grasped my hand in a hearty grip.

"So long," he said. "See you tomorrow. Give my regards to the little lady. Tell her I said she was a brick."

And the door closed behind him.

I LAY for a long time after Dooin's departure, dreaming of the new life his words had opened to me. It was a strange and wonderful life I pictured—I who had known poverty all my days, and who had never known love of woman. It was like dreaming of heaven. Finally I went to sleep.

When I awoke again it was night. The shaded light threw a shadow upon the wall. I was conscious of a presence by my side. The presence!

A hand lightly brushed my hair and rested upon my brow—cool, and soft, and conveying a sense of infinite restfulness. I lifted my hand and touched it, and at the sudden rustle by my side, I turned my head.

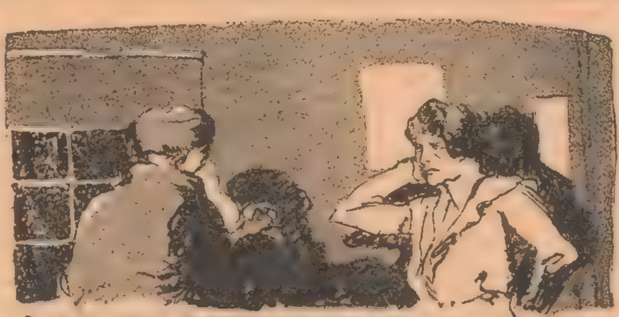
She was seated by my side, and the lamp lighted her face, a thinner face than I remembered, very beautiful, but with little drooping lines about the red lips. Her eyes were wonderful in their bigness and brightness.

We looked long at each other. Her bosom heaved and her lips parted. In her eyes I saw the light that a woman gives to one man only.

"Mary—my love!" I said.

She leaned toward me. Her breath, like warm sweet milk, was upon my nostrils. Our lips met.

THE END



AN EMERGENCY CALL

by HUGH PENDEXTER

Author of "The Chelsea Vase," "The Crimson Tracks," etc.

HE DID not suspect he was in the vicinity of a habitation till his horse came to a stumbling halt in the lee of a house. It seemed an eternity that he had floundered blindly in the heart of the blizzard now sweeping over the Wyoming plains on the impetus of a sixty-miles-an-hour wind. Nor was the shelter reached any too soon, as both man and beast were nearly spent with cold and exhaustion.

Stiffly sliding from the deep saddle, a snow-baked figure, the rider's first thought was for his mount, which he led to a small sod-covered stable at the rear of the low cabin. It was with difficulty that his benumbed fingers threw open the crazy door. The horse gladly entered the hovel and whinnied softly in appreciation as he felt the blanket spread over his frost-rimmed back. Then the rider bowed against the wind and fought his way to the house.

He repeated his heavy rapping several times before he heard a woman's anxious voice surmount the clamor of the storm and ask:

"Who is it? Is it Bob?"

"It's me—an old man, nearly dead from freezing," replied the stranger in a raucous voice.

The door opened gingerly, allowing the worn face of the woman to come between the weary traveler and the lamp. One glance at the pinched features, bowed form and the long beard heavily coated with icicles convinced her she need entertain no fears, and in a dreary voice she said:

"Come in. I was praying it was Bob."

"Thanky," huskily acknowledged the old man, stumbling across the threshold. "I'm plumb lost. Awful night out. Who's Bob?"

"He's my man," answered the woman in a choked voice. "I've been praying he'd come."

Then she fell to weeping softly.

Throwing aside his great coat and cap the old man extended one stiff hand to the fire while the other patted the woman's shoulder.

"Don't ye take on, ma'am," he soothed. "Bob's all right. He ain't fool enough to go rambling 'round on a night like this. Only an old fool like me would git locoed and cut up that caper. He'll turn up tomorrer all hunky."

"No, he'll not come," she moaned. "We quarreled and separated. I told him I never wanted to see him again. I never meant it, but he's sot and he won't come."

"Yas, he will come, too," warmly insisted the old man, now giving his back to the heat. "Why, all married folks has rows. It's a part of the game, I reckon."

"You don't understand," she whimpered, somehow feeling at liberty to confide in the stranger. "Eddie—my boy—is sick. He's been calling for his paw. He's going to die, I reckon. Oh, if I could only die with him!"

And she sank to her knees and bowed her head in a fresh outburst of grief.

"Please, ma'am, quit," begged the old man, nervously combing his beard clear of ice. "I ain't used to this sort o' thing. If the kid's sick why don't ye git a doctor?"

"I've been alone," she muttered, staggering to her feet. "I couldn't leave him. Now that you've come mebbe you'll stay and watch him while I go for a doctor."

"Hold on," he roughly detained as she reached for a man's coat and began pulling it on. "Go fer a doctor in a night like this?" And he pointed significantly at the white wall of snow ever dashing against the small window. "Ye wouldn't last two rods."

"I'll git a doctor or die," she fiercely cried. "Let go of me. Bentown is only a mile from here. I'll make it somehow."

"Bentown—a mile from here!" gasped the stranger, stepping back and staring at her incredulously. "Good Lawd! I've rid plumb in a circle. I 'lowed I was over Johnson County way. Wal, if that wouldn't skin a maverick! Bentown only a mile away!"

"You ain't within twenty miles of the county line," she wearily assured.

Then catching up a shawl and draping it about her head she firmly insisted:

"But I can make the town. I could do it if it was a dozen miles—for my boy. Keep him quiet while I'm gone, if you can. And if he cries for his paw mebbe you won't mind lying a bit and telling him as how his paw will be here soon."

Her emotion mastered her as she said the last, and with a low moaning sound she drew near the cot in the corner by the stove and, with the hungry mother-love burning through her tears, knelt and stared intently at the flushed face of the child.

"Ma'am, I'm going fer the doctor," growled the old man, catching up his wraps. "Stick by the kid. Where does the doctor live? I don't want to waste any time asking questions once I git there."

"Right across from the jail—it's the only house near there," eagerly cried the woman. "Oh, if you could only git him to come! If he could only realize it's a case of life or death!"

"I opine he'll realize. I'm sure he'll come," softly comforted the old man. "What's the matter with the younker? He'll want to know what kind of dope to fetch along."

"Diphthery," she whispered, her voice weak with horror as she pronounced the dread word.

"Huh! Jest ye keep yer shirt on," soothed the old man. "Dipthery is a joke with these yere docter persons. Jest keep comfy till I come back. So long, ma'am. And don't cry no more."

With the points of the compass freshly fixed in his mind and with the rushing wind at his back he managed to keep his tired nag on a measurably straight course. But so thick was the snow he found himself a solitary figure in the long narrow street before a single light pricked through the encompassing blackness. A few rods more and he vaguely made out a square, squat building which he knew was the county jail. Across the way a yellow spot glowed in the darkness, emanating from the doctor's house.

The doctor, a thin, silent man with darting eyes, opened the door begrudgingly. Before he could inquire his caller's business the old man had stepped inside the hall and was briefly explaining:

"Kid sick with diphthery. Git some of yer patent loco-juice and jump yer hoss. Case of life or death."

The doctor stared at him in amazement and backed into his snug little study. Then he remonstrated:

"Child sick with diphtheria? It's impossible. I know all the children in Ben——"

"Ye don't know this one," harshly broke in the old man. "It's a new brand to ye. I tell ye he's dying and we've got to hustle to save him."

The doctor's jaws squared.

"See here!" he angrily demanded. "Who are you who come here and tell me what I must do? Where is the child you say is ill?"

Ignoring the first part of the double query the old man tersely replied:

"Don't know the name. Lives a mile up the main trail on the right. She's a woman with a sick kid. Reckon that lets ye out. Her husband's name is Bob and they've separated."

"It's the Nevers family," grumbled the doctor, seating himself in a deep rocker. "If the man had stayed with his wife and had cared for his child instead of——"

"Yas, but it seems he didn't," obtruded the old man in a menacing voice. "What ye waiting fer? Didn't I say he was on the p'int of dying?"

"The average layman usually exaggerates

the danger of an illness," stiffly replied the doctor. "And——"

"Quit it!" rumbled the old man. "Don't ye dare fer to go to call me a layman. I don't take that word from anybody on the range. D'ye hear?"

"Good Heavens, you're crazy!" furiously cried the doctor, leaping to his feet. "Get out of my house, or I'll summon the sheriff from across the way. Get out now!"

"Yas, but what about the sick kid? When ye going to see him?" calmly asked the old man.

"It's none of your business, but I'll say that if the storm abates I will ride up there tomorrow," wrathfully retorted the doctor.

"Reckon we'll have to make different arrangements," exploded the old man, and with easy grace he whipped out a .44-caliber gun, solid frame pattern, old style, but convincing. As he tucked the blue-black muzzle under the doctor's sagging chin he said:

"Unless ye hanker to glide into the valley of the shadder ye'd better hump yeself into yer riding-togs, rope yer hoss, corral some of this yere diphthery dope and be ready to go with me inside of three minutes. D'ye foller my line of argument?"

"A—a crazy man!" gasped the doctor as his startled gaze traveled down the long barrel.

"Anything but a layman," sourly conceded the stranger. "Git busy!"

With a helpless glance at the jail lights, barely showing across the street, the doctor groaned and placed some fifteen thousand units of antitoxin in his medicine-case. As he procured his fur coat and cap he muttered—

"If I die in this storm my death will be on your head."

"If ye don't arrive in time to save the kid the coroner won't never believe ye died of freezing," grimly warned the old man. "Now, if ye've got all the dope ye need, we'll mosey out to the hoss-hovel."

"I must speak to my wife first," protested the doctor.

The old man rubbed his hooked nose dubiously with the hammer of the revolver, but finally consented.

"That's right and proper. No use to alarm a lady. But ye'll simply say: 'My dear, I'm going to trot up to Nevers'. His kid is sick. Will be back soon.' If ye blaze any other sort of a trail and try to tip her off to call up the sheriff I shall have to plug ye from the hallway. Git busy!"

With an icy spot on his back, where he believed the menacing revolver was pointing, the doctor hastily summoned his spouse and hurriedly informed her of his errand, much in the words suggested by his escort. Before she could make any wifely remonstrance he had backed through the door. Over his shoulder she caught a glimpse of an old face half-smothered in white whiskers.

"THERE!" triumphed the doctor, his professional pride to the fore. "The boy will pull through, Mrs. Nevers. But it was nip and tuck. See! Can't you observe that he already begins to improve? I'll be up again tomorrow. I'm glad to have saved him. But I don't fancy the messenger you sent."

Mrs. Nevers, who was devouring the boy with tearful eyes, cast a grateful glance toward the front room and whimpered:

"I don't know who he is, but it seems as if the Lord must have sent him."

"Possibly," cynically replied the doctor, closing his medicine-case. "But he's the first heavenly messenger I ever saw that toted a .44 Colt on his hip."

"If it wasn't for him you'd never known of Eddie's danger and he would have died," she simply reminded. "I haven't tried to thank you. Sometime I shall. I'm too choked up to try to thank any one just now."

"No thanks, no thanks to me," winced the doctor. "It's my profession to cure. I'll drop in tomorrow."

"But won't you sit down and rest?" she urged.

"No, no," he bruskly refused, throwing on his coat. "The storm is abating. I never expected to get here against that wind. Seemed as if it were a year. But going back will be easy. Don't worry, and try to get some sleep."

And he was gone.

In the front room, resting on a rug, slept the old man who had done her such a beautiful service. The tears streamed down her faded cheeks as she stood in the doorway and stared at him. He was not a very prepossessing old man as he lay there on his back, with blanket kicked back, and snoring harshly. Nor was there anything suggestive of a peace-loving nature in the long revolver resting within easy reach of his limp fingers. Some might even have pronounced him rather a desperate-appearing old fellow. But in the woman's warm gaze he was very noble. She wanted to wake him and thank him; she knew she could never thank him enough. Instead she softly entered the room and with a little mothering gesture rearranged the blanket.

At her approach his lean right hand closed mechanically on the revolver, but as her hands caressed him, the groping fingers relaxed and he muttered something below his breath. She softly closed the door and returned to the boy.

As he was resting quietly and as her mind was now relieved of its awful fear she found time to think of her husband. They had parted in anger, but the child's illness seemed to have erased the cruel emotions and left nothing but pity and love in her heart. What had seemed ample cause for resentment on her part now appealed to her as worse than trivial; the low cot and sick boy had taught her that. At first, after her husband had gone away, she had sought consolation in self-pity. She had told herself she had worked too hard, that her nerves were upset and that she had been licensed to make mountains out of molehills. She saw more clearly now; nothing mattered except the boy. For his sake, even if not for the love she still felt for her husband, he should grow up under the protection and care of both father and mother.

Condemning herself as weak and childish, and earnestly resolved to improve on the future, she stood by the window and stared out into the night. The storm had spent itself and no longer whipped the small panes with a smother of snow. As she looked she gave a low cry, half hope, half fear. A face had floated before her eyes, visible briefly in the murky, yellow light feeding into the darkness from her one lamp. And she feared it was but a trick of her imagination.

But as she composed herself to watch more closely the latch rattled clumsily and the door began to open. With both hands clutched to her breast she turned and wildly faced the newcomer. A snow-covered figure awkwardly stepped inside, moving as men move who have quit the saddle when half-frozen. Then as one white arm swept off the low-drawn cap she gave a low cry and whispered:

"Oh, Bob! Bob! You've come at last!"

"I've come, Jane," hoarsely replied the man, glaring in fear at the still, small form in the corner. "The doctor's wife—she said the doctor had come here—said it was Eddie. How—how is he?"

"Oh, Bob; I'm sorry we quarreled. We must never quarrel again," she wept, staggering to him. "It was judgment upon us, I reckon."

"My God! The boy—he's dead," shivered Nevers, clutching her arm tightly.

"No, no, no; he'll live—he'll git well!" she sobbed, clinging to him. "The doctor says he'll git well."

With a low moan the man sank limply into a chair and breathed long and deep for several minutes before he could still the tumult within him and falter:

"Don't cry. I was to blame. I'll never be to blame again. Don't cry, dear. It's all over—but not the way I'd feared."

A low cough caused Nevers to turn in surprise. He found himself looking into the same blue-black muzzle which had done so much in deciding the doctor to make the call.

"Excuse me," gently broke in the old man, "but I opine it ain't fer me to butt in on fambly reunions. If ye'll kindly keep yer hands up and hold the same position fer a minute, jest as if ye was going to have yer picter took, I'd think it very kindly of ye. Thank ye, sir. Now, jest a second."

And with two long strides the old man was behind the chair, had unbuckled the heavy belt and revolver and was backing to the door.

The woman, stunned by the spectacle, stared with mouth agape till the old man reached one hand behind him and raised the latch. Then she found her voice and reason and wildly explained:

"But this is my husband. This is Bob. We've made up our foolish quarrel, jest as you said we would. He wants to thank you fer gitting the doctor and saving Eddie's life."

Then rapidly to her white-faced husband:

"Don't you understand, Bob, this man saved Eddie's life? He came in here to escape the storm. He was lost. I told him Eddie was dying. He went to Bentown and got the doctor to come. If it hadn't been for him our boy'd have died. Why don't you thank him, Bob?"

"Saved the kid's life? Thank him?" dully muttered Nevers. Then regardless of the warning revolver he rose and placed his wife aside and advanced upon the old man.

"Saved my little kid's life, eh? Well, stranger, I do thank ye. Even a deputy sheriff has some soul, even if he don't always treat his woman white. But I thank ye for saving the kid—and I thank ye for bringing Jane and me together and back to our senses again. You don't have to vamoose the house till you're good and ready."

"Much obliged," dryly replied the old man, slipping his gun into the holster and tossing the man's belt and weapon upon the table. "Glad to have ye feel that way. But I shall feel better over'n Johnson County, which are some twenty miles away and which I'm a hankering to reach mighty soon."

"The sheriff and the posse took the north trail. You have a clear road to the south," blurted out Nevers eagerly.

"Thank ye kindly. Good night and remember me to the kid," smiled the old man.

As the door shut out the cold and the dark the woman ran to the window and held the lamp, to speed him departing. When she returned to her husband her voice was faint as she asked:

"Who is he? Why did he act as if you was an enemy? Who is he?"

Her husband buckled on his belt and, grinning sheepishly, replied:

"He's old Jem Peace, the worst old rustler what ever dodged a posse. I've been trailing him for two weeks, trying to head him off from Johnson County, where the rustlers feel to home and free-like. I got a tip he was making down this way. The sheriff and the other deputies was cocksure he'd go north. They 'lowed 'twould be a big feather to nail the old feller. Thank God I didn't, or he'd never been here tonight. Let's have a look at the kid."

A FLUTTER IN CANARIES

by W. TOWNEND

Author of "A-Roving," "Private Harris," "Oil at San Nicolas," etc.

AS THE long June day drew to a close Mr. Daniel Sullivan, first officer of the tramp steamer *Yarmouth*, became more and more miserable. His plump, brick-red face took on a new sadness, and from time to time he sighed heavily as one without much hope for this world or the next.

Seated on the rail amidships with his peaked cap on the back of his head and his arms folded, he wondered if life were worth the trouble of living. In his mind's eye he could see the future stretching before him, a dark and dreary wilderness unlit by any ray of comfort.

And pondering thus, Mr. Sullivan came

to the conclusion—not without a certain degree of satisfaction—that no one in the wide world had ever been quite so wretched as he; not even his most particular friend, Mr. Samuel Higgins, a very limp and despondent second engineer, who sat by his side and scowled dismally at the funnel.

"Not a penny!" said Mr. Higgins with sudden unexpected energy. "Not one single, solitary bloomin' penny. An' not a chance of gettin' another advance from the skipper, neither."

Mr. Sullivan eyed his friend with cold disfavor.

"So you are afther sayin' no liss than ninety-nine times since tay. Do you expect to find dollars growin' like oak leaves on the funnel stays or winches?"

"In San Francisco of all places!" continued Mr. Higgins, not in the least abashed. "An' stuck here on this rotten old tub, like barnacles, just because we haven't enough money to go ashore. Haven't you even got fifty cents on you, Dan?"

Mr. Sullivan did not take the trouble to answer a question so obviously absurd.

"Are we the only wans left?" he asked. "Where's the owld man? Did they all go ashore, Sammy? I declare to ye, it's dead an' buried we might be by the looks of it. Not a livin', breathin' sowl aboard, only us an'—an' the canary."

And Mr. Sullivan glowered at the bird-cage that hung near the door leading to the engine-room.

"Oh, ah! the canary, of course," said Mr. Higgins. "Never forget the canary, Dan, or you'll be gettin' into trouble. The chief says his prayers to that canary of his every night reg'lar—one bell in the middle watch. Gets out of his bunk in his little cotton nightshirt on purpose." And the second engineer of the *Yarmouth* nodded wisely as one who knew from personal observation.

A big black cat, of a most stately presence, strayed into view and sat by the gangway, licking a paw.

"Oh! An' there's Rufus!" said the second engineer snapping his fingers. "Rufus, dear, come an' talk to your uncle!"

But the black cat, named Rufus by reason of his color, blinked at him lazily without moving.

"Begob! But there's more people aboard this owld packet than I had anny idea of," said Mr. Sullivan. "Here's Mr. Brandon himself."

The door of the chief engineer's room had opened and a thin, narrow-chested, pompous-looking little man with large, watery eyes and an enormous sandy mustache stepped out on to the deck. He shot a quick sidewise glance at the second engineer and the mate sitting on the rail and then stood gazing up at the canary.

"H'm! Saturday night, an' not goin' ashore, Mr. Sullivan? How's that?" And the smile with which he spoke made the mate quiver.

"It's early yet, Mr. Brandon," he said. "We'll most like be goin' later, afther it comes on dark."

The chief engineer chuckled and thrust a stubby forefinger between the wires of the cage.

"Ah! you should be more careful of yer money. It 'ud last longer." He whistled at the bird, and the black cat trotted up and rubbed its head on his ankles, a token of affection that met with no fitting response.

"G'way, you brute!" said Mr. Brandon, fending off the cat with his foot. "G'way, do you hear!"

The cat, justifiably indignant, turned and walked slowly away.

"If I ketch that animal anywhere near my canary bird," said the chief engineer, "I'll kill him. 'E's been tryin' his best to get him ever since the day we left 'ome."

"Sure, the cat doesn't mane anny real harm, chief," said Mr. Sullivan softly. "The crayture wouldn't so much as look at yer bird."

"He'd better not," said Mr. Brandon. "Hover the side he goes the instant I ketch 'im monkeyin' with Dickie."

"It's a good little bird," said the second engineer. "A very good little bird. Sings well, too."

"Good!" said the chief explosively. "Good! Of course he's good. I wouldn't take fifty pounds for Dickie. No, I wouldn't. 'E's worth it, too. An' sing! Of course he sings. The best singer I ever heard. Trained by an organ he was, in Germany."

"What kind of a bird did you say he was, chief?" inquired Mr. Higgins in his mildest tone.

" 'E's what they call a Saint Andreasberg Roller, an' worth his weight in solid gold." And with this Mr. Brandon reached up and took down the cage. "I'm goin' ashore for an hour or two, so I think I'll put him back in the messroom where he'll be safe out of 'arm's way."

As the chief engineer of the *Yarmouth* walked down the gangplank on to the wharf, Mr. Sullivan gave a short laugh.

"That's a quare, ill-tempered little rat of a man, Sammy. An insolent little devil, too! Bliss him! He'd be brakin' his heart if annything should happen to that—that cockatoo of his. He would so."

"Makes me sick," agreed Mr. Higgins. "A Saint Andrew's humbug! How anyone can see any good in a canary bird beats me altogether! You know Mrs. Bartlett that has the store on the water-front, don't you? She's a partic'ler friend of mine, is Mrs. Bartlett, but she's as crazy about canaries as the chief is. The back of her place is just thick with 'em. I can't understand it myself, not on any account."

"N'more do I," said Mr. Sullivan.

"I'd give all the canary birds in the world for a drink of beer," went on the second engineer, stifling a yawn. "Got anything you could sell?" he asked.

"Not a blissed thing," said Mr. Sullivan.

For a long time neither the mate nor the second engineer spoke, and there fell upon the ship a deep and solemn silence broken only by the distant hooting of the ferryboats and the tolling of an engine bell.

And then, without warning, Mr. Higgins slid gracefully to his feet.

"Dan," said he, "let's be goin' ashore."

MR. SULLIVAN inspected him from head to foot gravely.

"Of course! On a five-cint piece an' two penny postage stamps! Me, I'm goin' to turn in early, an' git more sleep than I did lasht night."

"Come on," persisted the second engineer. "You don't know what you'll be missin' if you don't."

"I always did say that the English had no sinse of humor," said Mr. Sullivan. "What you're needin' most is a musthard poultice on yer chest."

"You go an' get a clean collar on an' wash your face, you big, fat-headed Fenian. That's what you need—an' badly."

"Cliver little man!" continued Mr. Sullivan, quite unmoved by any insult. "Handsome too, barrin' the shape of his nose an' the size of his ears."

"You do as I say," said the second engineer. "I know where I can lay hold of some money, Dan. I'm not jokin'; I swear I'm not. You go an' get your brand new little green hat with the bow at the back of it. I'll—I'll be ready just as soon as ever I've changed my clothes."

Having sailed with Mr. Higgins for three eventful years, and knowing him very thoroughly, the mate was puzzled.

"You mane it?" he asked.

"I do," retorted Mr. Higgins. "I said so, didn't I?"

Only half-persuaded, Mr. Sullivan went to his own room, and in less than ten minutes' time was meekly following the second engineer up the wharf.

"Sammy," he said, "I don't want to hurt yer feelin's in the laste, but wouldn't it be as well to make certain about that money?"

The second engineer, whose hands were thrust deep into the pockets of his coat, spoke forcibly, yet without heat.

"Now, look here, Dan Sullivan, you dry up! All you've got to do is to keep your big mouth shut an' let me do the talkin'."

"Where're ye goin', then?" said Mr. Sullivan uneasily.

"Mrs. Bartlett's. So now you know."

They made their way quickly along East Street in the direction of the Ferry building, and then crossed the car tracks and stopped in front of a small, shabby dry goods store, wedged in between a saloon and a cheap restaurant.

"Dry goods, is it?" said Mr. Sullivan. "But where in the world did ye iver see the likes o' this collection of rubbish?"

For while the window on the right contained nothing more romantic than flannel shirts, overalls, gentlemen's underwear, neckties, collars and socks, the window on the left was crowded with carven idols from the South Seas, coral necklaces, ivory fans and boxes, rings, bangles, coins, curved daggers, revolvers, abalone shells, models of old-time windjammers and such like, and on either side of the narrow doorway hung yellow oilskins and sea boots.

"Don't stand theorizin' there all night, Dan," said Mr. Higgins sharply. "Let's get it over an' done with as soon as possible."

A large, stout, placid lady with black hair and rosy cheeks smiled at them across the counter.

"Well," she said, "What is it now? Buyin' or sellin'?"

"You've met Mr. Sullivan, haven't you,

Mrs. Bartlett?" said the second engineer. "Him an' me are here on a matter of business," and he winked knowingly.

"No!" said Mrs. Bartlett firmly. "Not on your life. Nothing doin'! I'm through with that kind of woik. There's trouble enough on the water-front without me buttin' in an' gettin' hoit. You'll have to beat it up to Chinatown. All the same, you lime-juicers had better be careful; the drag's out an' the bulls are tryin' their best to——"

"It's not that at all, Mrs. Bartlett," said the second engineer. "It isn't really. Besides, we're not from Chinaside this trip, to begin with. I've got something to sell—something you'll jump at. Something that's more worth buyin' than all the opium in San Francisco."

"What is it then?" asked the stout lady. "Not poils, is it?"

"D'you remember me talkin' to you about canary birds?"

"Canary boids!" said Mrs. Bartlett with a certain animation. "Yes, I soitainly do."

Mr. Sullivan drew in his breath sharply. This talk of canary birds was beginning to get on his nerves.

"How would you like to buy one of the very best canary birds that ever came to the coast?" said Mr. Higgins in a husky voice. "Worth any three of yours put together. A champion. One of them kind you spoke about. Comes from Germany an' learnt how to sing on an organ. A something-or-other roller he's called."

"I guess you mean a Saint Andreasberg Roller," said Mrs. Bartlett carelessly. "Let's have a look at him. Did you bring him with youse?"

"I brought him in my pocket—for safety," explained Mr. Higgins; and Mr. Sullivan, leaning forward, saw in the second engineer's fist a canary bird.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Bartlett. "Oh, ain't he just the cutest thing!" She looked at the stupefied Mr. Sullivan, who stared back at her with his mouth open. "That's some bird! Where did you get him, hey?"

"Had him for three years an' two months," said Mr. Higgins with the air of one who believed in speaking the exact truth. "I bought him from a girl I met in—in South America. Blue eyes she had, an' golden hair, an' her lips——"

The stout, rosy-cheeked lady stooped down and dragged an empty bird-cage from under the counter.

"Cut it out!" she said. "Put him in there an' don't talk so much. What do youse want for him?"

"He's a fine little singer," said Mr. Higgins in a very business-like way. "How much 'ull you give?"

"Fifteen dollars cash," said Mrs. Bartlett after a moment's hesitation. "An' no questions asked."

"Gimme the money," said Mr. Higgins. "The bird's worth five times that, o'course, but we won't quarrel over a dollar or two. But I think, Mrs. Bartlett, you needn't have put in that bit about askin' no questions. If I didn't know you I might think you didn't believe what I've been tellin' you."

The stout lady laughed happily.

"Well, if youse ain't the limit! What next, I wonder?" She opened the cash register and took out three five-dollar gold pieces, which she laid in a row on the counter.

"There," she said. "There's your money. Now take it an' be off!"

"Much obliged, I'm sure," said Mr. Higgins. "That bird's the only pet I ever really cared for, an' it's breakin' my heart to sell him. His name's Edward. You'll treat him kindly, won't you? Good-by, Mrs. Bartlett."

"Good-by," said the stout lady in her placid way. "It's a treat to meet any one who's as fond of canary boids as you are. Good-by, Mr. Sullivan; drop in any time you're passin'."

The mate of the *Yarmouth* walked some distance along East Street in thoughtful silence. Then he halted and stared curiously at Mr. Higgins.

"Sammy," he said, "where did you get that bird?"

"What bird?" asked Mr. Higgins with a far-off expression in his eyes.

"That eagle you're afther sellin' for fifteen dollars."

"Oh, him! The ostrich, *you* mean! That's one I had from the time he was a kitten. I can't help it if he's like the chief's canary, can I?"

"Sammy," said Mr. Sullivan, "I'm afther developin' a thirst such as King Solomon in all his glory could niver have known. He was too wise. Fifteen dollars is it! Man! I'm shpakin' the thruth whin I say that you're not much to look at—you're not—but you've a most remarkable head on yer showlders. Most remarkable! You'll doubtless come to a bad ind, Sammy, but I'm proud of ye. But I'm thinkin', Sammy, me man, that we'd betther be sthrollin' up Market Sthreet."

And Mr. Sullivan smiled. The depression that had weighed him down since early morning had lifted.

ONLY once during the course of the evening was any mention, however indirect, made concerning the source of their wealth.

"Sarve him right!" said Mr. Sullivan, breaking off a heated discussion on the question of dry farming, a topic of which he knew nothing whatever. "He's always intherferin' an' makin' throuble. Now he'll be havin' something to make throuble about."

"Who's that?" asked the second engineer. "Any one I'm acquainted with?"

Mr. Sullivan frowned.

"I've a brother-in-law in Armagh who sells horses," he replied.

"I never did like horses," said Mr. Higgins pensively, examining his empty glass. "Not as pets, that is. Nor brothers-in-law neither. My sister's husband borrowed five bob off me eighteen months ago, an' he's never so much as offered to pay me back yet. Yes, mine 'ull be another steam, thank you."

San Francisco is a friendly city, inhabited by a friendly race of people; consequently it was late when the mate and the second engineer of the *Yarmouth* stood once more on the coal-grimed deck of their ship.

"Home at last!" said Mr. Sullivan with the feeling of one who has done his duty. "An' I'm glad of it. Spendin' money's a sthrain on the intellect. An', Sammy, if ye fall overboard, I tell ye plainly, you'll dhrown. I, for wan, will not jump in afther you."

He was groping in his pocket for his tobacco when the second engineer clutched at his arm.

"Look!" he said. "Will you tell me if you see anything over there, Dan?"

Mr. Sullivan's gaze followed the outstretched, shaking finger.

Seated on the bunker-hatch in the moonlight was the figure of a man, huddled up, his elbows resting on his knees, his hands covering his face. On the deck was an empty bird-cage.

Though it was a warm night, a cold shiver ran down Mr. Sullivan's spine. He shook himself free of the trembling Mr. Higgins.

"Who's that?" said he in a weak voice. "Who is it?"

The man on the hatch straightened his back and lowered his hands. Dimly, as through a mist, the mate saw the thin, pasty face and pale eyes of Mr. Brandon. At his side he could hear the second engineer's teeth chattering.

"Be cripes! 'Tis the chief engineer. Is it in pain you are, Chief? An'—an' what is the cage doin' out here?"

"Leave me be!" said Mr. Brandon wearily. "My canary bird's gone, an' nothin' matters now. Never yet have I had a bird like Dickie, never. An' because of that—because I cared for him, the door of the cage was left open. Was it a joke, to lose a man his pet? Had they a grudge against the poor bird? Man, my heart just aches when I think of the voyage home without Dickie; without hearin' him sing.

"It doesn't matter, I suppose; he was only a canary, but it's hard, somehow—it's —— hard on a man to lose 'is pet!"

He stood up, thin, round-shouldered, narrow-chested, and walked off, carrying in his hand the empty cage.

The second engineer and the mate watched him without speaking until he had entered his room and closed the door.

"Well!" whispered the Mate grimly. "Well! I hope you're feelin' as satisfied with yerself as I am. We're afther sthealin' his pet, an'—man, it's ashamed of meself I am. Come into me berth, or there'll be some one hearin' us."

Mr. Higgins staggered after him.

"I never thought, never for one minute, never for one second, Dan, that he'd take it that way."

"Oh! I'm not blamin' *you*, Sam," said Mr. Sullivan heavily, lighting the lamp over the bureau. "Not a bit. It was my own fault for not sthoppin' ye. I, at laste, should have had more sinse than to be playin' a thrick like that."

"Man!" The second engineer seemed near to tears as he dropped in a limp heap on to the settee. "Not till I saw him just now did I think what he'd feel like. If I could undo this night's work I would, willingly."

"We have done wrong," said Mr. Sullivan, folding his arms and frowning, "the pair of us. There's but the one thing we can do."

"An' that?" asked Mr. Higgins, hope dawning in his eyes.

"An' that," said Mr. Sullivan impressively, "is to buy back the bird."

The second engineer gave a low groan and sank back against the wall.

"We have but the ten cents left out of fifteen dollars. Ten cents! I ask you, can we buy a prize canary for ten cents? We can not. An', Dan, be sensible. There's Mrs. Bartlett! Will she be willin' to sell us the bird at the same price she bought it at? She must have her profit on the deal. She's a pertic'ler friend o' mine, of course, but friendship's nothin' when it comes to money."

Mr. Sullivan dismissed all difficulties with a wave of his hand.

"Is it profit she wants?" said he. "An' why not? Sure, it's no more than right that she should."

"An' will you give it him into his own hands, an' say that you had it?" asked Mr. Higgins.

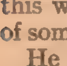
"Will I say I'm a born idjut, or the friend of wan? I will not. The bird will be found in the engine-room or the stokehole, mebbe, where he losht himself. There's not a thing that I've not planned for already, not wan—only the money. Where we will get that I do not know—yit. But wan thing I do know for sartain, Sam, an' that is tomorra you will buy back the bird from Mrs. Bartlett."

"I'll turn in now," said Mr. Higgins. "I'm tired an'—an' my head aches with all this worryin'. Most like I'll have thought of some way to raise the money by mornin'."

He lifted the curtain hanging over the door and disappeared into the night.

Mr. Sullivan knocked the ashes from his pipe and yawned. He, too, was sleepy and would go to bed.

He fell asleep, thinking sadly of the empty cage and the chief engineer with his face hidden in his hands, grieving for his lost pet.



NEXT morning, directly breakfast was over—a meal made wearisome by an anecdote of the Captain's, covering some years of his early life in the city of Edinburgh—Mr. Sullivan departed in search of the second engineer.

As he hastened along the bridge deck, his mind full of the task he had set himself, there came to his ears the sound of voices raised in anger. Mr. Sullivan halted by the door of the galley.

"Now, listen to me," said one of the voices, "an' I mean what I say. I'll kill that —— cat as sure as you live. I'm sick an' tired of——"

With the air of one enjoying an after-breakfast stroll in the sunshine, Mr. Sullivan walked slowly to the other side of the deck, turning the corner by the fiddley just in time to see the chief engineer shake his fist in the second's face.

"He didn't touch the bird," said Mr. Higgins weakly, giving back a pace. "I'm positive he didn't."

And then Mr. Sullivan saw that Mr. Higgins held in his arms Rufus, the black cat, whose appearance betokened indignation and soreness of mind.

"How do you know 'e didn't?" said Mr. Brandon, his chin thrust forward aggressively. "What proof 'ave you?"

"Why—why—" Mr. Higgins faltered "If it comes to that, what proof have you that he did? How could a cat unhook the door of a bird-cage, eh?"

"Some —— fool opened it, an' forgot to close it, an' the bird got out an' ——"

"An' flew away," said Mr. Higgins mildly. "That's what he did, sir. Flew away. He's probably over in Oakland by now, or Goat Island or Sausalito. Maybe he'll find a good home——"

With an inarticulate grunt the chief engineer stalked off toward the engine-room. Mr. Higgins dropped the cat on to the deck and wiped his forehead.

"What's the matther, Sam?" asked Mr. Sullivan. "What's he been talkin' to ye like that for?"

"That ginger-headed, bladder-bellied old cockroach," said Mr. Higgins, released from all restraint in his choice of words, "was tryin' to catch Rufus. Said he'd eaten his blasted canary. Wish he'd eaten fifty of his canaries, an' him, too, barrin' the effect he'd have on the cat's stomach. Did you hear him? If he hadn't been chief engineer I'd have given him a punch on the jaw that 'ud have stopped his talk for a fortnight."

Mr. Sullivan stroked his chin.

"Sammy—" he said, and broke off abruptly. Within hearing distance stood two of the deck hands, the cook, the carpenter, and the mess-room lad, waiting with expectant countenances for further disclosures.

"Come on over here, Sammy. I've a notion I'd like to shpake to you in private without bein' overheard by all the riffraff on the water-front." He swung around on his heel and made once more for the other side of the deck.

"Well," said Mr. Higgins, "what is it now?"

Mr. Sullivan grasped him by the arm.

"Have ye given a thought to what you an' me must be doin' today, Sammy? Have ye discovered a way of raisin' the money?"

"What money?" said Mr. Higgins.

"Why, to buy the chief back his canary, of course! Have ye forgotten so soon? Sammy, me brain's as bare as an empty egg-shell. Don't be tellin' me that you've not been thinkin' how we're to get that money!"

Mr. Higgins wrinkled his nose.

"No," said he. "I've not. What's more, I don't want to. —— the chief! So there! Sayin' the cat et his bird!"

The mate gazed at him with an expression of dawning horror. It occurred to him then with a feeling of cold despair that the second engineer's remorse of the night before had vanished.

"Sure, an' ye mustn't blame the man for that!" he said. "He's afther worryin' over the loss of his bird till he's not responsible for what he says."

"It was only a miracle that we got fifteen dollars yesterday," said Mr. Higgins, "an' miracles don't happen every day of the week. I've a headache still, an'—an' I'd give a good deal for a drink, Dan. I would so."

"There's not wan single, blissed way I can think of for raisin' five dollars, let alone fifteen," said Mr. Sullivan. "I was countin' on you. An' Sam, it's our duty to git back his bird for him; it is, really an' thruly."

"We'd best try an' forget that it ever happened," said Mr. Higgins philosophically. "What is, is; an' you can't alter it. That's how *I* always look at things, anyway."

Mr. Sullivan gave a deep sigh.

"I've a letther to write," said he. "Mebbe I'll think out a way yit."

And still hoping against hope, Mr. Sullivan slouched off, his hands in his pockets and his head sunk on his chest.

An hour later, having ruined three sheets of paper and spilled the ink on the floor, he threw down his pen in disgust. The thought that he was to go back on his sworn oath filled him with anger and contempt. He rose to his feet, lit his pipe, and stepped out on to the deck.

Mr. Brandon, heavy-eyed and pink-nosed, leaned over the rail and stared at the oily waters of the dock, sucking the while at the stub of an old cigar.

Mr. Sullivan drifted across the deck and stood by his side.

"Chief," said he, "it's sorry I am to hear o' ye losin' yer bird."

The chief nodded.

"The finest little bird you ever saw, Mr. Sullivan; more like a human bein' than a bird. Many's the time—" He stopped and pulled his straggling mustache. "You mark my words! If I ketch that cat around the mess-room again I'll 'eave it over the side. Dickie's dead, an' I don't care what they say. I'm no fool, Mr. Sullivan. That murderin' thief of a cat et 'im up. An', Mr. Sullivan, I'm a poor man, but I'd give a good deal of money to 'ave Dickie back again."

Mr. Sullivan cleared his throat and his eyes narrowed. He had sworn that the chief should have his bird back before nightfall, and there had come into his head an idea so tremendous that he quivered at the mere thought of it. He had discovered the one way in which he could make amends.

"Chief," said he, "couldn't—couldn't ye git howld of a bird to take Dickie's place? Wan like it! Sure, all canary birds is alike in their main characteristics."

The chief engineer of the *Yarmouth* gave a laugh full of contempt.

"To a man who 'as made a study of canary birds, as I 'ave, that's nothin' but sheer downright foolishness. Canaries, let me tell you, are as diff'rent from each other as—as cats, or chickens. Where could I find a bird out here like Dickie? A prize bird! In the past week, Mr. Sullivan, I have visited every single bird fancier's in San Francisco, just out of curiosity, an' there isn't one—no, not one—that has a bird for sale one-tenth as good as Dickie. There isn't one in the 'ole state of California."

"Chief," said Mr. Sullivan, "you're wrong. I know where there's the livin' spit of yer canary what's losht. So like him not even you could tell that it wasn't him."

"You're wrong," said Mr. Brandon. "You may think you do, but you don't. But if you did by any chance know a bird like you say you do, why—why, I'd buy it."

"How much would you give?" asked Mr. Sullivan scarcely daring to breathe.

"For a bird as good as Dickie—the same breed, the same age, the same shape, a good singer—I'd give—why, I'd give eight pounds, with—with pleasure."

MR. SULLIVAN'S eyes opened very wide, and he stared at Mr. Brandon in silent wonder. That Mr. Brandon, chief engineer of the *Yarmouth*, known far and wide from Liverpool to Yokohoma as the meanest man afloat, would give eight pounds for a canary, was impossible on the face of it.

"Eight how much!" said he after a while. "You'd give eight pounds for a canary?"

"That's not so much for a good canary," said Mr. Brandon with a certain tolerance of manner. "Do you imagine I could 'ave bought Dickie as cheaply as that?"

Mr. Sullivan, glowing with excitement, brought his hand down on the rail with a crash.

"Why, then—then, there's nothin' on airth to prevent ye from gittin' the bird. It's meself that could buy you it anny time that ye liked."

"You could, could you?" The chief engineer's large eager eyes were suddenly filled with suspicion. "Why should I not get it myself?"

"Because," said Mr. Sullivan—and there came into his mind the picture of the stout lady—"because the bird is owned by a widda, privately, an' is not for sale. She's a heap of thim little canary birds an' she sets great store on 'em. The wan that looks like Dickie is a something Roller—a name which was on the tip o' me tongue this instant—an' he comes from Germmany."

"H'm!" said the chief engineer. "It's the same breed, perhaps. But—but can he sing? He must be a good singer."

"Sing is it?" said Mr. Sullivan. "Sure there isn't a bird livin' but what he has it bate whin it comes to a matther of singin'. Beautiful it is to listen to. I'm tellin' ye the thruth, Chief, it would be a hard task to distinguish between that bird an' your Dickie."

"I could tell the difference," said Mr. Brandon, "in a dark room with my eyes shut, singin' or no singin'." He dropped the cigar butt over the side. "But," he said, "if the bird is only half as good as you say, I'll buy it."

"Chief," said Mr. Sullivan, nodding his head, "If ye want the bird——"

He paused and went on again with a shade less assurance.

"If you want the bird, I can try an' git it for you. But—I'm by no means sure that the lady will sell. Mebbe she will—to a friend of hers—at her own price. Mebbe she won't. Have ye the cage handy?"

"I'll get you the eight pounds an' the cage as well," said Mr. Brandon. "But, Mr. Sullivan, I'm trustin' you to buy as cheap as you can. An'—an', of course, there'll be something in it for yourself for the trouble I'm puttin' you to. But, mind this now! If the bird's not what you say it is, an' its singin' is not up to the mark, I'll not take it."

A few minutes later Mr. Sullivan thrust his head into the second engineer's berth. Mr. Higgins had just finished shaving, and was stropping his razor.

"What's up?" he said.

"Sammy," whispered the Mate, "is Mrs. Bartlett's open on a Sunday?"

"Business is business to Mrs. Bartlett, any day in the week," said Mr. Higgins.

"Will she take British money—sovereigns?"

"Will ducks swim, or sailors drink? Of course she will."

"Then," said Mr. Sullivan, "put on yer coat at wance an' come on out."

"What are you doin' with that thing?" asked Mr. Higgins, pointing at the empty bird-cage. "You don't mean ter say you've got the money, Dan?"

"Will ye shut up!" said the mate in a perfect agony. "I'm goin' ashore on business, an' I want you to come, too. But I do not want us to be shpakin'. An' there's raisons for that, too."

Not until they were well out of sight of the *Yarmouth* did Mr. Sullivan enlighten the second engineer as to his movements.

"Now!" said he, drawing a long breath and looking quickly from side to side. "Now, buy that —— canary bird back again as quick as ye can. Undherstand? Whether you've had a fallin' out with the chief or not makes no diff'rence. We must have that bird back the same as we said. I've the money on me. Catch howld of the cage till I hand it you."

"Where did you get it from?" asked Mr. Higgins in goggle-eyed amazement.

"From the chief himself. Eight pounds he was afther givin' me. Eight golden sovereigns. But you'll buy it as chape as ye can."

"Eight pounds!" said the second engineer staring at the money. "The chief gave you eight pounds to buy back his own bird! Are you crazy?"

"I am not. Do ye think that he knows it's Dickie that he's buyin'? It's another bird, the livin' image of Dickie, that's owned by a friend of mine. That's what I towld him. An' I said that I'd buy it meself. But, Sammy, that part of it I'll lave to you. I'm a poor hand at bargainin' with ladies, an' mebbe you'll think up some raisons for axin' her to sell."

"Man," said the second engineer with a look of much admiration, "you're a miracle! A bloomin' miracle! Will I get the bird from Mrs. Bartlett? I will, if I die for it. An' as cheap as I can! Cert'nly. But, Dan, he values his bird high if he'll give that for it."

"Sure, forty dollars is nothin' for a canary as good as Dickie," said Mr. Sullivan. "He was afther tellin' me that himself. Now be off with ye! I'll sit here on this balk of timber an' wait."

In what seemed to Mr. Sullivan an incredibly short space of time he saw the second engineer once more, approaching from the other side of the street. In his hand he carried the cage wrapped in a large blue and white handkerchief.

"Did ye get it?" asked Mr. Sullivan, jumping up from his seat.

"Did I get it!" scoffed Mr. Higgins. "But, Dan, it's as well you sent me after it, for many reasons. Mrs. Bartlett's laborin' under the impression that we're in deep trouble. Here, catch hold! The bird's in the cage."

"How much did you have to pay, Sammy?"

"Not as much as what you gave me," said the second engineer, feeling in his pockets. "Here's the change."

And he handed over a dollar.

"Well," said Mr. Sullivan, flipping the coin into the air and catching it again, "it's no more than a fair price for the bird, afther all. But we'd betther be gettin' back to the ship, Sammy. There's a job ahead of me that I don't like the looks of. What in the worrld shall I do if he sees that it's his own bird?"

"He won't," said Mr. Higgins. "He's not clever enough. An' if I know the little toad right, he'll swear it's no —— good at all."

* * *

MR. BRANDON sat in his room, reading a newspaper.

"You're back already, are you?" he said, taking off his spectacles. "Well, 'ave you got the bird?"

"I have," said Mr. Sullivan. He placed the cage on the bureau and untied the blue-and-white handkerchief. Then he stood back with the air of a conjuror performing his cleverest trick and waited.

The chief engineer gazed at the bird in silence. Mr. Sullivan, fearing that the worst had happened, edged in the direction of the door.

"Ho!" said Mr. Brandon. "Ho! This is the bird, is it!" He drew himself up to his full height and tugged at his mustache. "Well, then, let me tell you, Mr. Sullivan, that it does not resemble Dickie in the very least. Look 'ere, man! Look at the tail feathers! And 'ere! Look at the neck on him! Had Dickie a long, scraggy neck like yon? Do you mean to say that you actually thought this bird as good as Dickie?"

Mr. Sullivan opened his mouth and gaped feebly.

"Why, yes. It's—it's the best canary bird in the city of San Francisco."

"Then I can't say much for San Francisco," retorted Mr. Brandon. "You've been swindled. I said it was a mistake to send you after it. I knew it all along. They were too clever for you."

Mr. Sullivan turned a dusky red.

"No such thing!" he said in a vain effort to defend himself. "I've not been swindled. How could I be? Can not ye see for yourself, man, that the bird —" And then, with a gasp of horror, Mr. Sullivan subsided. "I got it from a friend, a lady," he muttered.

At this instant the bird, which had given a few timid twitterings, began to sing happily.

"What about that, then?" said Mr. Sullivan in despair. "Did ye iver hear singin' like that before? Listen to it! Not even Dickie himself could sing anny betther."

"That's not what I call singin'," said Mr. Brandon after a moment or so, "but I suppose I must take it. It's not worth the price, of course." And at that he glanced quickly at the big, red-faced man at his side.

"An' I've never yet asked you what the price was. 'Ow much did they rook you for this thing? What did you pay for it?"

His look of scorn gave place to one of some anxiety.

"Pay!" said Mr. Sullivan, choking down his wrath. "Pay! I'm afther payin' not quite so much as ye gave me."

As he groped in his trousers pockets for the change he saw the second engineer standing in the open doorway in an attitude of careless ease.

"That's a good little canary you've got, Mr. Brandon," said he, as one willing to let bygones be bygones.

"Good!" said the chief. "No such thing! It's Mr. Sullivan's idea of a bird, not mine. An' he says it's as good as Dickie!"

"Here's your change!" said Mr. Sullivan with a grim flicker at the corners of his mouth.

The second engineer vanished. Mr. Brandon held out his hand for the money.

"What's that?" he said shrilly. "One dollar!" And the mate nodded without speaking.

"Only one dollar out of forty!" said Mr. Brandon. He glared at the mate and then shrugged his shoulders with an air of bitter resignation.

"I might 'ave known it," he said, "an' I can blame no one else for this, only myself. From the very first I said that they'd cheat you. I was right. Payin' thirty-nine dollars for a bird like that. Have you no knowledge of the value of money, Mr. Sullivan?"

Mr. Sullivan, secure in the strength of his position, smiled.

"Were ye not sayin' only yestiday that ye would not take fifty pounds for Dickie?"

"I did," said Mr. Brandon with quiet dignity. "But, if you remember, I was referring then to Dickie, an' not to a mangey, moth-heaten, second-'and bundle of feathers like this. There's a difference that maybe you do not altogether appreciate."

"I did me best," said Mr. Sullivan. "I could do no more." And with a curt nod he left the room.

He walked slowly toward the bridge, his hands in his pockets, his cap over his eyes. The second engineer joined him.

"Dan," said he, "it was great! Never did I hear the like in all my born days!"

They stood by the rail near the bridge ladder.

"The mane, cantankerous little lap-dog!" said Mr. Sullivan in a low voice. "Did ye notice that he niver even offered me so much as a dhrink for me throuble? An' afther all I done for him!"

"Never you mind, Danny," said Mr. Higgins. "You got him back his bird, an' —an' he had to pay for it. He paid high, an' it serves him right."

"Yes," said Mr. Sullivan, "we did as we said we would. We got him his bird, an' I'm glad of it in spite of everything. As for payin', it's small cause for complaint that he has. Whin all's said an' done, he's afther payin' liss than the market price. An' that's a fact!"

"You're right there, Dan," agreed Mr. Higgins. "Much less."

"An' thin to say to me very face that the bird was no good an' that they had me cheated! The most ongrateful man I iver met. But, by ——, he was mad whin I give him his change!"

"Danny," said Mr. Higgins, "if Mrs. Bartlett were to come aboard now an' say that she'd made a mistake, an' that we'd paid too much for the bird, would you be glad?"

"Why should I?" asked Mr. Sullivan, rather surprised at the turn in the conversation.

"Oh, nothin' much! Only, if she did, you could tell the chief he was right about payin' too much, an' you could give him some of his money back."

"I would not," said Mr. Sullivan with grim emphasis. "He has paid too little as it is. I was a fool not to have kep' the wan dollar what we had in change. There'd have been a few dhrinks for our throuble, at laste."

Mr. Higgins nodded as if he had solved a deep problem.

"I'm glad of that, Danny," he said. "Very glad. Look what I've got for you!" He opened his fist slowly and displayed before the astonished eyes of the mate a handful of gold and silver. "There's twenty-four dollars," he said. "Not a penny less."

Mr. Sullivan stared blankly at the money and then at Mr. Higgins.

"FIFTEEN dollars I paid to Mrs. Bartlett," said the second engineer sadly. "Not a dollar more would she take. One dollar I set aside for the chief."

"Do ye mane to tell me," said Mr. Sullivan, breathing very hard, "that I sowld the chief back his own bird an'—an' made twinty-four dollars profit on the thransaction?"

"It looks like it," said Mr. Higgins.

"Sammy," said Mr. Sullivan, "there's some things I'm not clever in, I know, but how——"

"I'm afraid," said Mr. Higgins, "that it's not what I ought to have done. Yes, Dan, I did wrong; I know it now. I shall give the money back to the chief, an'—an' explain how it all come about. An' then, perhaps——"

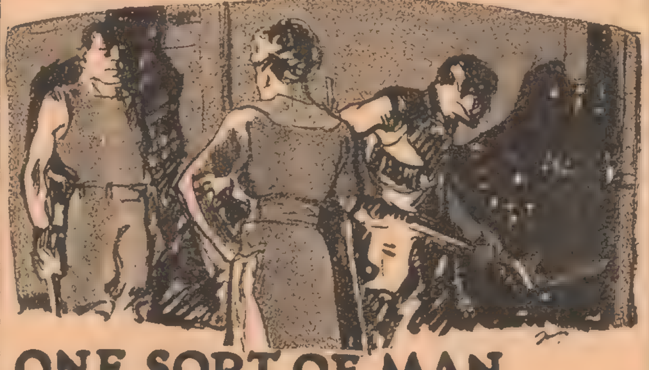
"You will do no such thing," said Mr. Sullivan in a sudden panic. "We've had throuble an' unpleasantness enough over that canary without havin' more. An' besides, the chief engineer would not thank ye. Man, have some sinse! Would he value his bird anny the more, do ye think, if he thought that he'd paid wan penny liss than I towld him? He would not."

"I've a notion," said Mr. Higgins, "that it won't be so very long, Dan, before you an' me is ashore again." He chuckled as one who has said something clever, and moved away from the rail.

Along the bridge deck from the direction of the galley came the black cat, well-fed and at peace with the world.

"What's up, now?" said Mr. Sullivan, who was pondering on matters beyond all understanding. "Where are ye goin'?"

"Me!" said Mr. Higgins. "Nowhere in pertic'ler. I'm just goin' to warn Rufus that under no circumstances must he eat this new canary bird of the chief's, same as he did the last. That's all."



ONE SORT OF MAN

by JAMES CHURCH ALVORD

OUT from the still darkness of the inner room a voice raised itself in a quavering cry.

"If I had one man I could trust—one man!" it wailed. "But Mac——"

The young woman sitting by the glimmering fire stirred herself uneasily. She had listened to Alex's voice with its insistent plaint, repeated over and over, for the last two hours, while the trained nurse slept noisily across the hall, and she, the wan, worn wife watched by the sick. All this afternoon, so pregnant with destiny for the house of Norton, the wife of the last of the race had shrunk from this audible reminder of the fact of her insufficiency. For weeks she had more than filled a true woman's rôle, and now a man was needed.

To be battling for Alex Norton's life was trying enough, no matter how willing the warfare. But now this other crisis had come on. The house of Norton, manufacturers solely for years of calico wrappers, the ninety-nine-cent type, set forth the best in the market. But—the mistresses of the land had shed them, to be followed by the maids, and the maids by the women of the mill barracks, that last resort of ousted styles. Calico wrappers were vanishing, and the Nortons of Nortonville ran crash up against disaster.

Two years of frantic and futile advertising had pushed the ancient house to the brink of bankruptcy and then Alex, in rank desperation, had plunged with his wife's young brother, a designer of women's garments, into making of cheap suits. Like the wrappers, they were to be the best article for the smallest price offered to the market. But the trade failed to snatch them up.

In the hour of his last fighting chance, Alex Norton had staked the whole pot on the order of one Lapinsky for ten thousand of their cheap suits. He put everything into it, from a final mortgage on the mill to his big limousine, and flung the cards to win.

The season had started badly; a cold Spring delayed all sales, trade went to smash, factories shut down from one end of the country to the other. Lapinsky began to wiggle under his bargain. But the order held fast legally; and the suits, six weeks before time, had been on the verge of accomplishment.

Then came troubles. First the boiler burst, next an epidemic of scarlet fever shut up sixty men; and the command to rush went forth. The whole shop had rushed until a week before the date set to complete the order; then Norton himself had come down with pneumonia and MacKinnon, the assistant superintendent, stepped into charge.

This was the night of the eleventh of April. The contract expired at twelve on the twelfth, and the last batch of the garments was not quite finished though the mill was running night and day.

"If I had one man I could trust, one man; but Mac——" Again her husband's appeal quavered through the dusk. She flung herself erect and, after a moment of suspense, tiptoed from the antechamber to the door of his bedroom. Tossing fitfully, Alex still slumbered. She turned to the window behind her, rushed it up with strong young arms and stood in the half-light, a tall, finely-molded woman, built on large, athletic lines. Her hand, gripping the ledge, was taut with muscles.

As she thrust her bronze curls out into the night the rain smote her cheeks, the drizzle swept in a wide splash across the rug beneath her feet, the roar of the storm bellowed past. The hills on either side rose like grim parapets across the dim horizon, the mill at the foot of the street glowed fantastically out of the smother, the electric lights spotted the town until it resembled a leopard's back. The church clock spoke the hour of seven solemnly from the drench.

As she closed the window, she could not quite shut out the diapason of another note, which underlay the swish of the rain and the clangor of the wind—the menace of a swollen river tearing through the town. Incessant, deep-throated, with its hoarse shout of frenzy it dominated the night. She clicked down the last inches of the window tremblingly.

What was it that MacKinnon would do or would not do because he wasn't "a man"? What——

The whirr of the telephone squealed like an answer to her question. It was the assistant superintendent himself. She drew the door behind her shut before she replied—

"Yes, Mr. MacKinnon?"

"We've got to quit, Mis' Norton," bleated his frightened voice. "Th' river's gainin' every second. There's an inch of swash in the furnace-room this minute, and old Mike is on the kick somethin' awful. The whole ramshackle thing shakes every time the water swats the dam. It's useless stickin' another minute. I'm dead sorry, but—but—it's just quit for us. The good Lord knows that——"

"Cut the piety out," she demanded, "and tell me what you want."

She smiled grimly to herself as she heard him jump till the receiver clattered in his hand. He'd never known the elegant mistress of Nortonville to speak like that before.

"I want to ask Mr. Norton——" the bleat shivered, and stopped wheezingly. She'd frightened him almost as badly as the freshet.

"Well, you can't ask him. But you know what Mr. Norton would——"

"Norton is a daredevil," he broke in harshly. Evidently the freshet fright went deepest home.

"But those suits, Mr. MacKinnon? It means bankruptcy, dishonor, the end of everything." The young woman lowered her tones to their deepest note.

"It ain't a matter of suits," blubbered the voice. "It's a matter of human lives, and——"

"Of your life, Mr. MacKinnon, I take it."

Just then the door behind blew open with a sudden acceleration of the tempest, and the cry from within the chamber pierced her through and through——

"If I had one man I could trust—just one!"

Then for the first time she realized that there was one who could not fail her husband in this, his sharpest need.

"Wait," she shouted, and the masculinity of her voice startled her with its peremptoriness. "I am coming down. Wait—do you hear?"

A moment she hesitated, the receiver still at her ear, while a bored hello girl suggested through it, "Did you get them?"

"Not yet," she laughed back almost gaily, "but I will."

ASHE hung up the receiver, still smiling mischievously. Emma Norton's face was not unlike that of a baby, with wide eyes of violet blue, bobbing bronze curls on either side of her softly-tinted cheeks, but the set of her jaw, when one noticed it, was almost tragically granitic. Yet so far nobody had noticed it.

She gathered cloak, rubbers, umbrella, whisked back to the phone to order her brother to rush promptly to the mill; then, stealing across the hall where the nurse lay asleep, she groped for the nurse's leather visiting-case, carried it to the light and selected something that shone brightly. When the case was back in its place she left the room, to tiptoe back in a minute and arouse the nurse.

The woman came yawning, protesting that she still had an allotted hour of sleep and the patient was quiet.

"If you'll watch straight until tomorrow noon, I'll give you a hundred dollars," whispered the girl. "Is it a go?"

The woman grinned sleepily.

"Say, you're the wonder of the lot," she yawned. "Surest thing you know, I will."

Emma Norton smiled to herself again when she detected the melodramatic step with which she was stealing, ten minutes later, into the high mill door. Something new within her was moving her in her rôle. She crawled, foot by foot, down the hallway and slid like an apparition in upon the assistant, cringing over his desk.

His wizened face, with its Punchlike nose and chin, its frizzle of toneless hair—it had been carrotty, and now was nondescript with insprinkled white—turned a shade more pallid as he glanced up and found her there. He squirmed before her. Moved by some dramatic absurdity the girl chuckled aloud.

"This is no laughing matter, marm!" he commented pompously.

"I'm not laughing at the catastrophe," she cried, "but at you; you're welshing already. Why, the fight hasn't begun. I'm here to start it, though."

He arose solemnly from his chair, a dried-up pretense at a superior sex, an automaton of a creature, a penhandle for recording orders and for executing them rigidly; useless in an emergency, yet lifted above all femininity by the fact of his trousers—at least so *he* saw things.

"I'm the boss here, since Mr. Norton does his own supering, and I'll be interfered with by no woman living," he tried to blaze her down with his red-rimmed eyes.

"But Mr. Norton would not give up," she cooed.

"Norton's a daredevil, and I've told ye so. I guess he's got a wife to suit; but the good Lord has put the lives of these men and women in my hands and I'll ——"

"Have a care," she answered.

He sneered:

"This ain't no place for footlight work. You get back home—you hear me?"

She only laughed in an inane way. The fellow before her slumped irritably back into his desk, leaning to press a button. The instant his head was turned an amazing change came over her. A sickly-sweet odor reeked through the room.

"What are you at?" he shrilled, and tried to get his legs from beneath his desk.

She whipped two large handkerchiefs from her coat pocket, and soaked them with a colorless liquid dribbled out of a vial. Now he was out of his chair; but as he whisked around she sprang upon him, twisted the handkerchiefs about his beak of a nose and prim mouth, huddled his bony weakness up against the file-cases and held him with tigerish young strength.

He fought for a moment, then fell, scrabbling with uncertain hands against the polished oak of his desk-lid. Then she produced what she fetched from the nurse—morphin and hypodermic. Diluting the morphin and filling the needle, she made ready with nice precision, though she panted with her efforts. She was trying to save the house of Norton, and intended to do her job straight.

Sliding up the man's sleeve she pushed the needle home, while he moaned and quivered. She yanked him swiftly to the couch and, stepping catlike into the hall, twisted the key behind her. Under the arch of that big front door her brother dodged in from the dark—a clever-faced youngster, with her loveliness minus her jaw. She commanded her voice to calmness.

"Mr. MacKinnon is unwell, Chester," she stated. "You must help fill his place."

The roar of the water hurtling past the mill, the throb of the building, muffled her speech. Errand boys flitted feverishly across the hall, a grimy fellow rattled impatiently at the knob of the assistant's office.

"Where's Mac?" the mechanic asked of her.

"Mr. MacKinnon is sick and asleep." She never quivered. "What is the matter?"

"Plenty the matter in the basement, mum. The furnace is drownding out."

He ducked back into the depths; she followed. Hell was loose down there. Here the roar of the torrent, filling every nook of the ill-lighted, low-ceilinged room, was intolerable. Its waves, streaked by the reflection of a street light, flung past the three dingy windows, and under the door thin sprays shot out.

The men had choked off the deluge with cotton-waste, but the flood was squeezing a path back again. Two inches of water puddled the floor along which the coal-heavers swashed back and forth, tossing coal into the greedy mouths of the furnace. The increeping water steamed and bubbled at the base of those fiery yawns. From the next room the incessant purr of an enormous wheel cooed its protest against the tumult within and without.

At her coming the men threw their shovels, handle up against the wall.

"We're quit, mum," snarled the older of the two. "That's what we were after sending word to Mr. MacKinnon, mum. We——"

"MacKinnon isn't here to give orders tonight. You'll have to take orders now from me."

The man stepped closer to her, folding his arms pugnaciously.

"Sure, mum, you're not goin' to fly in the face o' the shop, and th' shop——"

Emma Norton marched steadily down the stairs.

"I am Mr. Norton's wife," she declared. "You know what Mr. Norton would say."

"Indeed an' I do," he sniggered. "He's the feller as flies in the face o' Providence every trip, he is. But where's MacKinnon, mum?"

"That is none of your business." She gulped at meeting him on his accustomed colloquial level but went firmly on: "You'll do as I say! You'll stick here until the water puts the fire out, until the walls cave in, until the whole building bursts like a slashed egg; you'll stay here and you'll fight—with *me*." She was breathing deeply. "I'm here to make you do it, and I will make you do it."

The two men before her merely grinned sheepishly. *She* make *them* do anything!

DOWN from the foot of the stairs the girl sprang into the bilge along the floor, grabbed a shovel from the wall, stooped to the coal, filled in a heavy load and flung the lumps on the sputtering blue flames. Her skirts swashed through the water as she passed to and fro.

The men watched her—the older with rebellious eyes, the younger burning into blushes as her elbow jolted him contemptuously in passing. Once—twice—three times—four—five—six times she shunted the coal in, and neither moved. Her lips narrowed, her eyes brightened, but her muscles worked steadily beneath her gauzy sleeves and she looked at neither as she passed. On the sixth fling she turned to face them.

"Cowards!" she stormed. "Yellow-livers! To allow a woman——"

The younger man leaped at her, whipped the shovel out of her hands and bent swiftly to his task, but his brown eyes turned again and again to her in silent admiration. The older man, touching a sooty forelock with a sootier finger, fell to beside him steadily.

Three hours she stood there, the water sizzling through the door, the spume slapping at the window, the tide oozing higher and higher inside the room. Up it crawled until barely an inch remained between it and the draft door of the furnace. The sputter of the steam, wavering before those beds of scorching coal, sang an accompaniment to the *slop-slop-slop* which the huge wheel in the neighboring basement had mixed into its purring.

"Did ye catch on to thot?" asked the older man anxiously, and the younger whisked around to watch her eye. The water, slapping into the ash-box beneath the fire, began to boil with a peevish fidgeting noise. The man pointed.

"I see it," she answered, and did not drag her skirt one inch out of the swash. "Be a sport!"

A moment later her brother poked his head into the door.

"Gee," he chortled, "you're going it some tonight, Toots—that's a fact; but you've got to get a move on. They are on the rampage upstairs; they can't stand this tremolo action a moment longer. The old shack does rock like a shoot-the-chute. Come up and tame 'em, Em; you're the kid for that."

Mrs. Norton flashed on the men at the fire.

"Are you with me to a finish?" she questioned.

"We're wid ye," they chorused.

She turned and scuttled up the stairs, the dirt from her clothing marking her way. All night long she tramped the floors of that mill, encouraging, jeering, threatening, flattering, pleading, everywhere bringing submission to her unshakable will. Her brother, walking sometimes beside her, sometimes darting off on swift errands, caught the hot infection of her spirit. Gazing at him, she almost imagined that his jawbone stiffened to the curve of her own. It had not. He had borrowed for the moment from her intensity, that was all.

At midnight the water had risen to within three inches of the bed of glowing coals; the draft drew hard. At half-past twelve it was stationary. At two it started slightly to recede. The rain was stopping. When Emma peered down into the furnace-room two jovial faces beamed back at her.

"Ye're th' stuff, mum," growled old Mike. "Ye'd give th' darnedest boss a-goin' a run for his money, ye would." But the girl shook her curls at him wilfully.

"You've smacked the Blarney stone too often, Kelly," she tossed back, and flew upstairs again.

When the smudge of the increasing dawn dulled the electric lights all over the shop, she stole down into the room where MacKinnon had snored the night away. She entered unobserved, hesitated a moment, counted out a quarter of a grain of morphin instead of the half grain she had administered first, and squirted it into the man's bared arm.

He flinched once more in his sleep. Slipping the case back into her pocket, she stepped to the window and, for the first time missing the wail of the storm, allowed her hand to travel upward with the rolling shade.

Scarlet fire was burning all the east; and as she leaned at the window a thin line of the flaming sun tipped up across the edge of the hill and the world awoke to glory. The pavements glittered, the twigs of the trees dripped sparkles, the sky was one wide stretch of blue burning; while the river waltzed to the music of the morning.

The girl passed, almost dancing herself, to the office. An hour later, as the building took on another oscillation beneath the feet of men and women reverberating up and down the steps—for the day gang was relieving the night gang—her brother poked his head in cheerily.

"Sit tight, sis," he commanded, and wrinkled his face all awry in triumph and disgust. "We're almost at the home-plate; though that sneak hasn't rushed 'em for a cent this last week. We've gripped right on; we're in to win. But 'twill be mighty close to midday before we come in; I'll keep you wise."

At eleven o'clock Lapinsky smirked in. That the mill was rushing he knew, that the order was unfulfilled he guessed; but he asked no questions, grinning softly to himself, twisting a glaring emerald round and round his finger, solicitous for her husband's health, overwhelmed by admiration at her pluck in stepping into the superintendency.

His grins didn't hide his nervousness, for he wished to be out of the trade—wished it furiously. The girl, dictating letters to a stenographer, threw constant chatter to him over her shoulder. But at twenty minutes to twelve the suspense had brought her close to the endurance limit, and to sit and smile and pull commonplaces out of her brain had become a task beyond her wearied strength.

If Lapinsky guessed this, he didn't show it. His eyes were on the clock; his hand was wriggling his diamond shirt stud into a ceaseless whirl. Suddenly somebody moved in the next room, uncertain feet tottered about the floor; a knob rattled, as this time Emma had not twisted the key behind her. Then MacKinnon, tousled, blinking in the dazzle of the Spring sunshine, wabbled to the threshold of the office. There he halted, grabbing at either post.

"What's this?" he gabbled, and shook his head at them like a man awakened from a long debauch. "I said this mill was goin' to shut down—and—and—it's goin' to shut down; for there ain't no woman in the whole——"

Lapinsky's face lit up jubilantly, and his carved ivory imitations made a superb dental advertisement out of the center of his countenance.

"No woman," reiterated the assistant superintendent, picking up the heavy spanner. "No woman on earth as——"

And then she struck him in the throat, saw him slump down and stepped back. Over her shoulder popped the face of a young man—wide blue eyes, a flop of auburn curls, skin shimmering with pink and white, mouth filled with the laughter of the morning. How much he resembled her!

"They're done," he crowed delightedly, "done—and boxed!"

The clock struck a quarter to twelve. Lapinsky shrugged his shoulders and pinched his check book, but smiled and said—

"Vell, you got *vun* man in der blace!"

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE ON THE VELDT *an article by*
GEORGE ALBERT SCHREINER

Author of "War Day by Day," etc.

THE statement that the late Boer war created two classes of soldiers of fortune is subject to the question: What is a soldier of fortune?

In its more popular acceptance, the term identifies a sort of military nomad, who journeys here and there in search of adventure—who is never satisfied with a day on which a life insurance company could safely write a policy for him. Now and then the gentleman has been accused of having strong homicidal tendencies which only the turmoil of the battlefield could still. In tradition he appears as a man of prepossessing appearance, pleasing address and a strong leaning toward deviltry of any sort, and that fine swash-buckling for which the Gascon has become so famous.

Of this variety of soldier of fortune the Boer army had a liberal sprinkling, to be looked upon more properly as a sort of condiment that gave the God-fearing patriots of the veld a little of that worldly military aspect armed forces ought to have.

But there was in the Boer camps another sort of soldier of fortune. Before the mobilization in October, 1899, this element had followed pursuits of happiness in the gold-mines of the Witwatersrand, and in little stores on the crossroads of the veld. When war became inevitable it rallied to the defense of the *Vierkleur*.

Few of the men had ever seen war before, but they were quick to learn; moreover, many of them had seen service in the armies of Europe. In a way this was disastrous. Oil and water are more likely to mix than were the military tactics of the Boers with those of the modern general staff. Disaster followed.

At Elandslaagte the Hollander and German corps were decimated, because they stood their ground after the Boers had deemed this futile. At Magersfontein, the Swedish commando of thirty-five men, bent upon emulating the example of that most illustrious soldier of fortune, Gustavus Adolphus, could boast of a single survivor, and he wounded.

The two Irish brigades were constantly in hot water for a like reason. Colonel Villebois-Mareuil's little band of Frenchmen perished at Boshof as completely as if the earth had swallowed it—leader and all. Everywhere the soldier of fortune found the veld full of surprises. On the one hand he encountered an enemy ever alert and ready to hit hard, and on the other he had comrades in arms with whom the slightest military imprudence was a serious offense, to be punished, if need be, by leaving the offender to his own devices.

But the soldier of fortune fought hard on the veld. It is to be doubted whether his casualty percentages elsewhere have been as heavy. His ambition to make a good showing has been rewarded—rewarded with that fine anonymity found in company graves. Many trenches are occupied today by the bones of *frijwilliger* and Boer alike, and over them stands usually a shaft of granite with the inscription:

> Here lie men who fought for the Boer Republics, 1899-1902.

It is the effort which counts in the end, and whether this was due to the fervent patriotism of the Boer, the sense of justice of the *Uitlander*, or merely the soldier of fortune's desire to feel the excitement of the battle, does not matter, especially when all three classes made the effort without so much as "greenback" in the perspective. Pay there was none in the Boer army.

Reports of the Transvaal government, published by Major Carl Reichmann, United States Army, who was attached to the Boer forces as military observer, show that 734 foreigners were registered as what we may term soldiers of fortune. Of this number 311 came from Germany and Russia, 17 from Holland, 75 from France, 8 from Italy, 40 from the United States, 34 from Scandinavia, and 249 from various other parts of the globe, including Austria, the Balkan states, Turkey, Spain, Ireland, Argentina and Brazil, and the Dutch East Indies.

These men came into the country during or shortly before the war and constitute, therefore, the soldiers of fortune proper. Prior to their coming there were in the Boer camps about 400 Frenchmen, 650 Hollanders, 225 Russians, 550 Germans, 300 Americans, 200 Italians, 150 Scandinavians, and 200 Irishmen. These men, however, as already said, had lived in the country before the climax came and assembled under the *Vierkleur* as a matter of principle. The *Uitlanders*, or foreigners of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, disliked the Englishman as cordially as did the Boers, and racial animosity was not always the least factor in a decision to go to the front.

AT THE outset of the campaign the soldiers of fortune in the Boer camps showed a strong tendency toward segregation. The result of this was the organization of commandos known by the national designation of those forming them. Often these bodies were organized by men who enjoyed considerable military fame; more generally the grouping would be spontaneous, and in that case a man thought best fit to command was elected Veldcornet or

Commandant as the strength of the organization dictated.

What became of the German, Hollander, Scandinavian, and French commandos has already been referred to. After Elandslaagte, Magersfontein, and Boshof, the soldiers of fortune flocked for a time to the leadership of Colonel Ricardo, an Italian officer who had seen service against the Abyssinians and the Americans in the Philippine Islands. The Irish commandos continued as independent organizations, as did also the American scouts, and a part of the original German commando. But the fiasco at Komatiepoort in October, 1900, eradicated the last semblance of segregation, and thereafter the soldier of fortune was to be found in every Boer camp, joining in many cases compatriots who had deemed it prudent from the start to fight in the Boer commandos.

It had been demonstrated early in the war that the Boer variety of military tactics was the best under the circumstances, though not by any means as effective as it could have been. The foreign commandos met Tommy Atkins more or less in his own manner, a condition which gave the numerical superiority of the British forces an immediate and telling effect. While the soldiers of fortune were literally aching for close-quarters work, the Boers preferred to do as much damage as possible with the rifle and then retreat to another position, in the taking of which the British were likely to suffer more heavily than in a mêlée.

Absence of bayonets dictated this course. The impetuous soldier of fortune was soon to discover the value of this discretion. To meet a bayonet charge with rifle fire is possible under favorable auspices; since these can not be picked, the offensive-defensive becomes the only alternative worth while.

There was only one thing which the Boer held against the soldier of fortune, and that was his failure to be cautious. The former merely hunted; the latter could not understand war without its traditional trimmings. The few colors that fell into the hands of the British belonged to foreign commandos: whenever a Boer position was revealed to the enemy some soldier of fortune, anxious to show his contempt for either life or the fire efficiency of the opponent, was culpable. Yet Boer and soldier of fortune were fast friends, though usually they had to communicate with one another with their hands and a sort of pidgin-Dutch that became the *lingua franca* of the camps.

On the whole, the foreign element in the Boer army was a motley aggregate. There were colonels of the French, German, Russian, Dutch, Austrian and United States armies, numbering no less than two score. Majors and captains hailed from every part of the civilized globe, and lieutenants, on leave of absence, and often cashiered, may have constituted as much as twenty per cent. of the whole.

Needless to say, the majority of the men holding, or having held, commissions in other armies came to the Transvaal for the purpose of being given a command. But few of them were ever so honored. The Boers refused to serve under them as soon as they had demonstrated their aptness in high casualty returns. The result of this was that such hopes had to be given up or exchanged for service in the trenches and behind the boulders. To many this was nothing short of hardship, but there were few who on that account left the country. In the end the Boer citizen-soldier was so much of a general himself that a commission really did not matter, and was apt to impose responsibilities which the true soldier of fortune is none too anxious to assume.

The "Garibaldi" of the Boer camps was not slow to relish the haphazard discipline prevailing. During the day he could have his fill of fighting in a free and easy manner, and at night he could stretch beside the camp-fire of buffalo chips and fence-posts and narrate his wonderful experiences, wetting his throat now and then with whatever could be had, and puffing the while at a pipe full of the best Magaliesbergen tobacco. There was also that fine companionship of which he is so fond, not to mention the charm of the soldier of fortune's cosmopolitanism. To have a Frenchman and a German bear arms in a common cause and live in the same tent is so incongruous that he who can gage the full meaning of this comes close to sensing the peerless *camaraderie* of the soldier of fortune.

Then, too, the campaign offered him a chance to be occupied, even if not so much as a *soldo* was forthcoming from the bankrupt state treasury. Above all, the "under-dog" position of the Boers appealed to the foreigner. If there is one thing that has uniformly been in favor of the soldier of fortune it is his gravitation toward the oppressed. The armies of might and of *de facto* governments have never known him in great numbers—in fact, he has studiously given them a wide berth, though now and then he has upheld the hands of tyrants—not knowingly, however.

Thus it came that there were no soldiers of fortune in the British army. In its rank and file there could be found men who had seen service in other military establishments, but the strict enlistment contract kept the bona-fide soldier of fortune out of the English camps. There is so little room for initiative in the "regular" military establishments of the world, that the military nomad avoids them with as much care as he can exercise.

To hay-foot-straw-foot it in compliance with the wishes of a drawing-room hero is not what the soldier of fortune looks for, though he is not averse to shining on parade with all the plumage regulations prescribe or permit. In fact, he is a poor soldier of fortune who will not put on a few extra buttons, or keep the trimmings of his make-up immaculately clean. Generally he is the Beau Brummel of the camp, down to taking a bath when others find the water altogether too cold.

With such temperamental bents, the soldier of fortune found the British army an institution to be avoided. Striving constantly to follow the example of some great prototype, it would not do for him to become a mere hireling of a government. It is one thing to be an enlisted man and quite another to be what is called a mercenary—the two terms are about as synonymous as servant and employee. As far as the writer knows, the number of soldiers of fortune in the British camps was confined to a dozen American scouts, who gave excellent service.

SOLDIERS of fortune are easily divided into types, and in presenting a few of these the writer hopes to add to the store of knowledge on this very interesting subject:

A most interesting case was that of the Count. When last seen he was interested in cork legs—one particular cork leg. For the time being, he said, the imperfect artificial limb he had imported from Lorenzo Marquez would do. At Port Said he would get another.

"Of course, I could get along with a crutch for a little while," he mused audibly to the writer. "But that would put me in the organ-grinder class."

"You still adhere to caste, I see," ventured the Count's *vis-à-vis*.

"You see, my dear fellow," replied the one-legged man, "I will have to do so. I return to a country in which social distinctions are acute."

"Your commission is a goner, isn't it?" asked the other.

"Yes, but I will be able to be of some service to my country for all that," was the reply. "Do you need any underwear? I hate to cut these pants, as my physical modification will require. They have served me so long and faithfully that I would give them a more honorable end than amputation. You are welcome to them."

"Your initials, crest and all?" asked the writer.

"Certainly, you see they are woven in."

"If they were on a label, we could take them off."

"What's the difference? Leave them on."

"I'll be sailing under false colors," suggested the plebeian.

"Well, you won't. After all—what is it that Scotch verse-maker used to say? 'A mon's a mon for a' that,' or something to that effect."

"Well, this war has been the better part of my education," said the Count, handing over a box of cigars. "Say, if you ever get to Germany, be sure to look me up. Most of my estates are in Nassau. I divide my time between them and Dresden."

A sincere *Auf Wiedersehen* on the part of the Count marked the parting.

The Count had hoed a pretty hard row. He had come to the Transvaal with the intention of reorganizing the Staats Artillerie—the only standing military force of the South African Republic. Before he had gone very far, he decided to shoulder a Mauser and fight in the trench or from behind the boulders on the *kopje*. That he held a commission in the German artillery, had written several books on artillery tactics and practise, had been military attaché at Rome, Madrid, and St. Petersburg mattered little. He had come on the scene with three trunks and a collapsible rubber bathtub; for a while he had maintained his own servant and a personal mess—in the end he ate *mealiepap* with the others, groomed his horse himself, and washed dishes like a good fellow. And, ultimately, he got what he was looking for: experience with machine guns—Maxims, Vickers and Nordenfelds. They claim that his recommendations to the German general staff are largely responsible for the wholesale introduction of automatic rifles and field-pieces in the German army since the Boer war.

The Boers had taken position at Dalmanutha, and the British had done likewise at Belfast. For about ten days the artillery of the latter had combed the kopjes with unnerving persistency. The Count had one machine gun, the writer another. Both of them were in position at the apex of an echelon described by two lines of trenches and military crests well covered with large rocks—the favorite *locale* of the Boer when on the defense.

Six batteries of the British were preparing the terrain for an infantry attack. The gunners of the enemy had divided the hillsides into sectors and were raking their targets with a shrapnel fire under which little could live.

By that time the British artillerymen had come to learn a thing or two about ranges in the attenuated atmosphere of the *Hoogeveld*, and on this day their performance was a thing of beauty.

The Count said so.

The tripod-legs of the machine guns had been spread-eagled. For the time being there was nothing better to do than to take cover. The Count and the writer were hugging two boulders as closely as possible. Not a human being on that kopje budged more than an inch at a time. Well-timed shrapnel is a sore trial, especially when the enemy is unhampered by artillery from the other side—the case on this day.

For comfort's sake the Count had drawn up his legs so that his knees were almost even with his shoulders.

"I wouldn't do that," said the writer, who was hugging a boulder lengthwise.

"Why not?" asked the Count.

"Because in that position you offer a larger target," was the reply.

"Not at all," insisted the Count. "At least not against shrapnel. It is different with rifle fire, of course."

In a way the Count was right. Shrapnel exploding above the position would have a greater radius of effect on a man lying prone than on one curled up like the Count. There was a lively discussion on that point, when something happened.

A blinding sheet of flame leaped out of the ground, intense heat swept over the boulders; there was a deafening report, followed by the screeches and shrieks of bits of steel, shrapnel-balls and broken rock.

A shell had exploded in front of the boulders covering the two men.

When the smoke and the red dust cleared away, the Count was seen wriggling on the ground, like a fish just pulled out of the water.

From the split left trouser-leg hung, glistening in the sun, a knee-cap, splinters of another bone and strips of flesh.

HE SEEMED to be a quiet man. Max Grabow in fact was a sad one. His appearance and demeanor bespoke good breeding and refinement of character. He had blown into the laager from nowhere in particular. That Grabow had antecedents nobody ever doubted. But, to reiterate, he was unusually handsome of face and well built; his address was pleasing, his manners the best, his knowledge of things good, his courage undoubted, and his willingness to serve became the subject of remarks.

Grabow admitted that this was his first experience in the field. He was rather familiar with Vienna, Gratz, and Trieste.

How ordinarily he gained a livelihood he seemed to have forgotten. The opinion was that he had a past which he wished to forget for some good reason.

But little things of that sort do not count among men who live as much in the future as do those who take chances in the trenches and behind the rocks on the kopjes. Grabow was a good fellow and a good soldier.

Still, it is a small secret that will not out. One night, at Nooitgedacht, in the narrow cañon of the Crocodile River, Grabow forgot himself.

As if to take off the edge of the series of reverses which had driven the army across the republic, the men were entertaining themselves with songs; not the dry hymns and psalms of the burghers, but the stuff one hears in light opera and in the street. In the crowd were several soldiers of fortune who sang nearly as well as they fought. The Italians had been manhandling Verdi, a Frenchman had more or less ill-used the Toreador song from "Carmen" and various parts of "Manon," a German had sung "Edelweiss," a pathetic little lay about the sons of the Alps, and a Montenegrin had growled a melody about his undying hatred of the Turks, as he explained afterwards.

It was now Grabow's turn. Possibly the quality of the vocal effort roused him to action. He broke out with a song that was a stranger to everybody—Yradier's "La Paloma."

It is doubtful whether such a voice had ever been heard in the *kloof*. Grabow had a soft, limpid tenor that showed all the earmarks of cultivation and practise. Four times he had to sing "La Paloma," and when finally the crowd tired of the melody, he had to extend his program, which seemed to comprise every Vienna light opera ever written.

At least that much was known about Grabow after that: He had been a professional singer, probably on the opera comique stage. The "expert" testimony of the camp found nothing wrong with his voice—it had not cracked, so to speak.

Up at Spitzkop a Lee-Metford bullet found Grabow. It plowed its way through his neck, crushing the base of the skull. For an hour the poor fellow lay on a slab of stone with his white face turned toward the blue sky and with the blood slowly but surely ebbing from his ears. The last thing Grabow did was to thank with his eyes the man who had forced some lime-juice and water between his lips.

JANOS was somewhat of a bully. He was a Magyar, admitted it readily, boasted of it, and looked the part.

In the American vernacular, he was a picturesque guy. Had he stepped out of one of the pictures that show Hungarian soldiers drinking Tokay while passing pleasantries with buxom maidens, he could not have been more picturesque, nor more theatrical. He was a *poseur*, if ever there was one.

One day he walked into the wrecked Stock Exchange building at Klerksdorp in the southwestern Transvaal. He wore a dark-brown corduroy riding-suit, set off by a flaming sash around the waist and a pair of fine leather hip boots, which closely fitted his calves but hung above the knees in many a fold. The only thing about him that reminded one of the dress of the Boers was a big slouch hat with brim turned up on one side.

Janos had the type of face that goes well with such things. Heavy, black brows shaded a pair of sharp eyes that seemed to have a cruel glint as long as you did not know your man. A bristly mustache partly hid a set of thick lips.

After traversing the littered floor a few times, Janos sat down on a bench. Everybody was looking at him, and Janos enjoyed it.

"Good day, mynheer!" said one of the freshest artillerymen in the room.

Janos grunted.

With another glance at the company, which had now resumed whatever it had been doing when he appeared on the scene, Janos pulled a murderous knife out of his sash and proceeded to whet it on the sole of his boot.

This was something new to everybody.

"Going to butcher sheep?" asked the fresh artilleryman in Dutch.

"I don't understand," said Janos without interrupting the business in hand.

"Are you going to butcher sheep?" repeated the youngster in his best Afrikander English.

"No," replied Janos, "I am getting ready to skin a few Englishmen—skin them alive, at that."

"Ah, you're a fierce man," remarked the artilleryman with a mock gesture of horror.

"Yes, and I am not particular about nationalities either," added Janos in a growl and with his brows contracting.

"Same here," said the youngster coolly. "I have eaten chaps like you for breakfast many a time."

Janos being physically the superior of the artilleryman, there is no telling what would have happened had the two been alone. As it was, Janos, feeling that he had been checkmated, left the room.

Those big boots proved his undoing very shortly afterward.

At Donkerhook, east of Pretoria, the burghers had dallied in their positions longer than was usual. As the English infantry swept up the hillside, the Boers made a dash for their horses in the rear, leaped in their saddles and raced across the veld. Poor unfortunate Janos hooked the top of his big boots on some part of the saddle, fell to the ground, and before he could get up the horse was dashing after the others. There was no time to attempt his rescue, and, moreover, nobody cared particularly about Janos by that time.

So far as is known he became a prisoner of war—without skinning more than possibly his hands when he landed in the dust.

"DYNAMITE" DICK hailed from the glorious state of Pennsylvania, U.S.A. Before the war he had been handling the subject of his sobriquet in one of the mines of the Witwatersrand. When the Queen's petition had been signed, and the Bloemfontein Conference between Krüger, Steyn, and Milner had failed to better the chances of peace, Dynamite swore that he would let his hair grow until the last vestige of that alleged British suzerainty over the Transvaal had been consigned to total and inexorable oblivion.

It should be mentioned here that Dick's ancestors had been on the right side of the American Revolution, and had done yeoman service. So Dick's hair was given carte blanche, and by the time Lord Roberts had penetrated as far as Kroonstad, he had a mane that was really a thing of beauty. Buffalo Bill never owned so fine a crop of hirsuties.

For a time Dynamite frequented the camps of the Irish Brigade and that of the American scouts. But to pump lead on a kopje was not exactly his proper sphere. Familiarity with nitro-gelatin had not only bred in him a contempt for the stuff that would raise goose-flesh on the observer, but it had also made him an expert in its use. It was conceded in all the camps that Dynamite could do more with a stick of this nitrocellulose compound than any other man could accomplish with a hundredweight of it.

It was thought best, therefore, to employ him as a pioneer, a field in which he became so active that the British army was ultimately obliged to place a large price on his head. On at least two occasions Dynamite slipped in the rear of the British columns operating in the vicinity of Colesberg, Cape Colony, and blew up bridges in so effective a manner that operations at the front had to be modified considerably. How he managed to get through the British lines, and dynamite bridges that were supposed to be well guarded, is one of the things that will never be fully explained. "Dynamite" Dick, perhaps better known as Richard King, is no more.

Dynamite enjoyed the company of women. When his column approached a *dorp* or town, he would lead his own little caravan of dynamite-laden mules to one side, fish from one of his pockets a small mirror and comb, and put his poet pompadour in order. Like as not some of the settlement's fair population would come to see the defenders of the republics, and then he would have to look his best. However, he was not the only one who did this. For real, sterling, and sincere admiration of the ladies, soldiers of fortune, and soldiers in general have not their equal. To the chagrin of others, Dynamite carried off more honors in the field of love than was thought his due. On one occasion, however, he met his Waterloo.

He had drifted down the Vaal River with his mules and dynamite, and had done considerable damage to ferries that were likely to have great value to the ever-advancing enemy. On the day he sank the large mud-scow that traveled back and forth over the Vaal at Coalmine Drift, Dick was notified that another general retreat would start that night. At Schuman's Drift he joined the commando to which the writer was then attached.

The line of retreat lay through a district known as the Gatsrand, a locality in which rocks are many and farms few. With commissary arrangements on their last peg, this was no trifling matter, leading on one occasion to a supper of braisé mule. Needless to say, everybody was hungry.

But one fine morning the chances for a decent meal looked bright. A part of the commando had reached a farm which as yet had not suffered much from the eternal commandeering.

The good Boer *frou* invited the men to offsaddle on the place, water and feed the animals and wait for a copious mess of beans and biltong which she had started as soon as the body hove into sight. It was a grateful company that gathered around the kitchen in the yard with mess-kit and appetite ready.

But Dynamite was no longer hungry. He had contrived to get a loaf of bread and a small bucket of milk, and now his interest in beans was nil. His attention was given to something altogether above beans, and such—the daughter of the Boer *frou*.

The girl had been sitting on the veranda of the house when Dynamite discovered her. To a very polite address he was given a very pleasing answer. With beans and biltong still uppermost in the minds of the others, Dynamite had this field to himself.

Now, this little Suzanne was about as pretty a girl as one could want to meet or even own. Dick thought so, and, it is feared, said so. She was still very young, had the regulation peaches-and-cream complexion of her type and years, wavy brown hair and hazel eyes. Her gingham dress looked fit for a queen.

Of course, Dynamite managed to say that he was from the U. S. A., and that he was in this war as a matter of principle. No doubt in the end it would be the American Revolution all over again, especially if one William Jennings Bryan should be elected to the presidency of the United States. Dick announced that the gentleman in question had promised the Boers help of some sort.

But all things come to an end; so did the beans and the biltong. With the ration duly stowed away, and the horses rested up and fed, there was no reason for dallying. So the Veldcornet's whistle sounded the "Upklim burghers."

"Christine," called somebody in the house, "we are going to eat."

Dynamite started making his adieu by rising to his feet.

The girl rose from the rawhide settee, searched with her hands for the wall of the house, and then cautiously advanced toward the door.

Dynamite seemed a little perplexed.

"I have enjoyed your talk so very much, mynheer," said the girl fumbling for the latch of the door.

As she stepped over the threshold, a hand from the inside grasped hers. Dynamite saw the girl led off. With a puzzled look on his face he mounted his horse and rounded up his pack-mules.

"No doubt you thought you were cutting quite a swath with the girl," said the writer to Dynamite a little later.

"She acted peculiar when she left," admitted the man with the poet pompadour, still greatly perplexed.

"You see, Dick, she is blind," explained the other. "One of those optical-nerve troubles that doesn't show on the outside of the eye."

"Well," rejoined Dick in his slow Pennsylvania mountain drawl, "I wouldn't mind that. Maybe I'll see her again after the war is over."

But he never did.

JOSEPH DOLIBOIS wanted to be a warrior bold. He would follow the example of his glorious compatriot, Colonel Villebois-Mareuil—if possible he would emulate it.

Dolibois, strictly speaking, was not a military man. In France he had been shunted into the territorial reserve when his time for service in the army came. So for a year or two more he followed his peaceful occupation of joiner, making bedsteads, tables, chairs, and other furniture.

When the Boer war broke out he bought a ticket for Lorenzo Marquez with his savings, bade his relatives good-by, and set out with the determination to give succor to the two republics on the veld. Dolibois was a republican. Whenever anybody mentioned royalism, imperialism, the Bourbons, or any other divine-right sort of governmental institution, he would snort with detestation:

"*Va t'en!*"

Joseph came to Pretoria with one train and left by the next for the front. The English had been "*écrasés*" at Colenso. He would be there when the next disaster was visited upon them.

With a brand-new Mauser and bandolier, likewise two hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition, Joseph set out from the capital. On the way to the Natal front, he rehearsed to himself some of the famous sayings of one Napoleon Bonaparte. Ah, if only the great emperor were alive! What he wouldn't do to the British would not be worth recording.

"*Mais, helas! L'empereur n'est plus.*"

Joseph would be a Little Corporal himself.

"Do you know how to shoot?" asked Veldcornet Pienaar, of the Jeppesdorp Commando.

Joseph shrugged his shoulders. He did not understand.

"Like this," explained Pienaar, going through the motions of firing a rifle.

"*Oui, bien sure!*" was the assuring reply of Dolibois.

"Know how to ride?" continued Pienaar.

"*Je ne comprends pas, m'sieu,*" said the puzzled recruit.

"You know, like this. Sit on a horse," said the Veldcornet, straddling legs and bobbing up and down several times.

Even poor Dolibois had to laugh.

"*Oui, m'sieu.*"

"His intentions are good, anyway," said Pienaar as the Little Corporal strutted away. "I hope he won't come to grief."

Up the steep slopes of Spion Kop crept men with belly close to the ground and rifle ready. That kop would have to be taken back. Why in the name of blazes did English commanders always take positions on the summits of mountains—especially since the memory of Majuba was still so very young?

Commands were issued in whispers and passed along the line. On the crest above all was silent. British confidence and an utter contempt for the Boers had not even permitted the precaution usually employed in the field. The first outposts were met only a short distance in front of the trenches.

There was a sputter of rifle fire in the gray dawn, a moment of silence, and then the dance commenced. Of a sudden long lines of little blue flames became visible on the crest, to be answered similarly from below. Bullets began to sing, shriek, and chirp through the air, and at several points machine guns and pompoms started their death-dealing chatter. Down the slope of the mountain rolled many a body, and when the men finally reached the top one of the worst close-quarters engagements of the war took place.

By noon the affair was over. Spion Kop had been retaken by the Boers more as a matter of principle than one of military import.

The dead on the Boer side had been placed under some trees, preparatory to interring them. Several men were busy gathering the identification-cards the men carried.

When the Red Cross man transcribed them, one of them read:

> Joseph Dolibois. Residence: Villiers, France. Age: 26. Commando: Jeppesdorp. Killed in action at Spion Kop, January 26. Nature of wound: shot through the head.

"The funny part of it is," said Veldcornet Pienaar to the writer a few days later, "that the little Frenchman never fired a shot. He had put a clip of five into the magazine and another cartridge into the chamber. We found them that way. It's tough, isn't it?"

FRITZ—I think his other name was Scholz—would have made an excellent Winkelried. That broad bosom of his could have accommodated the halberd points of a whole company. As a modern soldier of fortune, he was somewhat out of place. For Fritz possessed neither the dash nor build of the man who fights in all climes and for any cause. Fritz was just a complacent, stolid, and above all solid German, who in his younger and less corpulent days had seen considerable fighting in Chile and Peru, and who had earned considerable renown in one of the Swazi campaigns—or was it the Magato insurrection?

But Fritz had strong soldierly instincts, which no amount of adipose tissue could submerge. Thus it came that when the burghers went to the front he threw up his job in the Modderfontein Dynamite Factory, Ltd., and returned to soldiering.

The first difficulty Fritz encountered was when he had to get a horse. It takes some mount to carry three hundred and twenty pounds of man, not speaking of saddle and other trappings. At first Fritz was furnished with a Percheron which for a good many years had distributed beer through Johannesburg. But at Elandslaagte—sad affair—the Percheron got a bullet in a vital spot. How Fritz managed to escape afoot has never been fully explained. But he sprinted hard for a distance, it seems, dropped in his tracks from sheer exhaustion, and was mistaken for dead by the pursuing Fifth Lancers. Being fat even has its advantages.

In the trenches Fritz was all right. It was his lack of mobility that bothered him. After the Percheron had been lost he tried a gaunt, raw-boned horse of uncertain color, but mostly white. But that did not add him to the mobile army. Try as he might, Fritz would lose the head of the column, where he started in order to profit by a length anyway. And then his soldier heart would ache. Fritz has been seen on many critical occasions leading a singular procession—a man tugging away at a horse that positively refused to be hurried.

So in the end Fritz joined the *foetgangers*, an organization of decrepits which stayed mostly in camp and attended to chores. Oh, the agonies which this proud soldier suffered! Here he was, an old, seasoned soldier with an arm as steady as ever leveled a rifle, and with an aim as true as was ever known—and unable to get to the front. Fritz tried to reduce his weight. But there was so much flesh draped over his six-foot-three frame that he soon gave it up.

Necessity is the mother of invention—

even more on the battlefield than in the humdrum life of peace. So Fritz thought.

Eureka!

The next day Fritz had an interview with old Theron, Veldcornet of one of the Johannesburg commandos. Certainly, the plan was a good one. Every man was needed. How he got to the spot where he was needed did not matter.

Fritz returned to his tent with a broad grin of satisfaction.

For about a week Fritz was nowhere to be seen. It was understood that he had gone to Newcastle on pressing business. He had.

Eight days afterward, Fritz reappeared in camp. He made his entry in a Cape cart, drawn by two lively mules.

Be it stated for the benefit of the uninitiated that a Cape cart is a two-wheeled vehicle, so built that it will stand the strain which the bad roads of South Africa impose.

Hereafter Fritz would go to battle in a chariot. He did on many occasions. When last seen Fritz and his team of mules were hot-footing it after a little debauch at Pan Statie, to the accompaniment of the clatter of the many pots and pans Fritz carried for his messmates.

HOW Yelle de Haas—if that be the manner in which he spelled his first name—managed to get away from mother, the writer has never known. But he should have been with mother, for his own good; as will be seen.

Yelle hailed from Java, and was faintly Eurasian—there was just enough of Javanese blood in him to make a most interesting young Dutchman. He came to the front with a money-belt literally bursting with gold pieces, and in some mysterious manner he kept replenishing his traveling bank regularly once a month. Mother must have forgiven him when she found that the heir to one of the biggest coffee plantations in the Dutch East Indies was determined to help his kin across the Indian Ocean.

Yelle was possibly eighteen years old, and none too big for his age. It was his notion to get into the "regular" part of the army—he adored uniforms—and for this reason he joined the artillery. That the piece he worked with was an old muzzle-loader wounded his pride every time he swabbed the old fellow out. But he was a soldier, was Yelle—every inch of him, though the inches were few.

It was a privilege to serve with Yelle's old brass barker. The platoon, if we may call it that, had the best of everything and largely maintained itself. Naturally, Yelle supplied these sinews of war, and when the lieutenant failed to recover from some twenty shrapnel wounds, Yelle was partly instituted, and partly constituted himself, Commander in Chief of the thunderer and the Maxim and Vickers which had been added to this "unit." Times were such that "jumping" of that kind did not matter much—it was not likely that anybody would have a commission under the new government that was growing stronger with every blooming day.

Yelle's battery did some great work and showed wonderful staying power. Thanks to the fact that the old brass piece had not been used in the early part of the war, owing to its great antiquity, there was ammunition for it when the more modern guns rested in fragments at the bottom of the Crocodile River at Hectorspruit.

So Yelle went up through the *Laageveld*, did good work at Spitz Kop—there are dozens of Spitz Kop battles, but only one that made history—and could generally be relied upon to instil in the burghers that peculiar confidence which comes from having artillery bark in your rear.

But one day Yelle came to grief. High up in the azure heavens a shrapnel died of colic, emptying its contents on Yelle's contingent. Alas, through the few inches of abdominal dimensions Yelle could boast of went one of the *loopers*—one of those dull-blue, leaden balls they stuff shrapnel with.

If you are familiar with what the military surgeon opines in a case like that, you will understand poor Yelle's position. In the United States army they put a red tag on the man so wounded and set him to one side—to die just as quickly as he can.

So it happened with Yelle.

Just for curiosity's sake, they cut him open afterward and discovered that the ball had ranged downward and had torn the intestinal tracts to ribbons.

Poor Yelle!

ALTENDORF was a man past forty, and twenty of his years he had spent putting in semesters at the various German universities. The veld robbed Alt-Heidelberg of one of its ablest beer drinkers when Altendorf decided to journey thither for the purpose of taking a real vacation, or something of that sort. The many duels he had fought had left their souvenirs on his face in such liberal instalments in fact that his physiognomy resembled more a spoiled blue-print than a human countenance.

The burghers not familiar with Altendorf's history used to pity him a great deal. Had he been at Elandslaagte and in contact with the Fifth Lancers? Altendorf would say that the Fifth Lancers could not do so fine a job as he carried about with him. What he says today may not tally with this. Even the *Mensur* has its uses.

There is just one occasion on which Altendorf distinguished himself. He was not much of a soldier and not averse to boasting of it. Anybody could be a soldier. To attend universities and *Kommerse* was a different undertaking. What Altendorf ever got from these seats of learning is not apparent. It should be stated, however, that in addition to his cut-up face, he acquired a rather "beery" appearance. One can not drink steins by the dozen per diem for years and not look a little apoplectic around the gills.

Times had been very bad. The engagements around Van der Merwe and Eerste Fabriken had led to a series of retreats that ended only at Middelburg. The men were in a dejected state of mind. Even Middelburg had to be evacuated, if so dignified a term will fit a plain helter-skelter get-out-of-the-way.

Pan Statie was reached, and Altendorf's opportunity came.

He was thirsty. But the only store in the place had been commandeered; to wit, looted. But Altendorf was very thirsty—not a sort of water thirst, but a regular aridness which only hydrates in solution will assuage.

There were others in the commando who were similarly afflicted. How they got the notion that there might be something under the floor of the station-house has never been explained. However, they not only had the notion, but the goods. That scamp of a station-agent must have traded illicitly in fire-water with the Kaffirs, and one of the men must have suspected it. When the boards of the floor were lifted up, a can of raw alcohol was discovered.

New spirits of wine do not make much of a drink.

Altendorf, applying all the wisdom of Heidelberg, thought hard. How could the stuff be made potable? With a chemical laboratory at his disposal Altendorf would have made anything out of the alcohol. But all the theories on force and matter, elements and chemical valences, atoms and affinity, avail not when the matter itself is not at hand. But Altendorf kept on thinking; with this result:

In half an hour there was at the disposal of everybody who wanted to partake a beverage consisting mostly of hot spirits of wine and water, some sugar, a pinch of pepper (cayenne), a dash of brandy which he had appropriated somewhere, and some cloves he had found in the kitchen of the deserted store.

To his credit be it said that on this raw August morning (late Winter on the veld) this punch did not taste bad and had a welcome warming and cheering effect. The trouble was that some of those at the party shipped more of the stuff than they could carry, conspicuous among the latter being the engineer of the armored train which had pulled into the station.

Much hilarity ensued, and the bucket in which Altendorf brewed the mixture was kept boiling. Even the Veldcornet had been enticed.

But something happened.

Somebody yelled:

"Daar 's de Englese!"

"Where?" shouted the red-faced chorus in mixed amazement and consternation.

"Over yonder, on the *bilt*," explained the wise man who had kept his eyes open.

The writer took a glance along the man's finger with his binoculars and saw a mounted battery of the British unlimber. Some cavalry or mounted infantry was heading off to the left in an endeavor to cut off the retreat of the merry gang at the station.

"To horse!" shouted the Veldcornet.

In a few seconds the men were galloping across the railroad track and into the open veld.

The engineer was thrown into the box-car that served as living-quarters for the men of the armored train, and the Kaffir fireman pulled the fort on wheels out of the station as quick as he could work the levers.

Just then the shells began to sing through the air.

Much of the good stuff had been left behind, and the next day the writer was among those who wished that Tommy Atkins had finished the grog. Such a headache!

Altendorf's achievement will for many years stand as one of the most notable of the war. He is said to have written a book since then on "The Last Goths"—a novel which deals with the end of Roman dominion at Alexandria. The military flavor of the effort should be traceable to the veld.

CESARE had seen service in many lands, and labored under the hallucination that he was a sort of sequel to one Garibaldi. As far as he admitted this, he had done some years with the Foreign Legion in Algeria, and by some miraculous trick had risen to the rank of Captain in an organization officered exclusively by native Frenchmen.

Later he had been in the Dutch Colonial forces in the East Indies. Still later he had fought with his own countrymen against Abyssinia, and still later he had reorganized the Chinese army—a job at which most soldiers of fortune of his particular type have been engaged. He had also made things interesting in Latin America, being in two places at the same time.

Later he had fought the Americans in the Philippines, had in fact been one of the chief military advisers of Aguinaldo, and now he was fighting "de Inglese." For a man less than forty years old, Cesare had done considerable fighting; and bloodshed—why, if he had kept track of all those who fell by his hands he would be pronounced the champion killer of the world.

Cesare was rather a fierce character. He had with his person at all times a trusty little stiletto that had silenced many an outpost and that would silence others. Fierce mustachios, reaching the ears easily if the wind blew that way, added conviction to his yarns of narrow escapes and groans of dying men.

Yet Cesare was not a bad fellow. He would sing from early morn to late at night—mostly about his *Napoli* and *Santa Lucia*. There was a countryman of his, in the same commando, who swore that he remembered Cesare rowing alongside the steamers in Port Said and singing for all the coppers of Europe that seem to have their confluence in that naughty little town.

As said already, Cesare was at heart a good soul, and as averse to killing a chicken as any man well could be. One day he positively refused to shoot a steer which Ricardo, the commandant of the Italians, had commandeered from a neighboring camp. Whether Ricardo did this the writer will not say. The reference is merely an allegation.

But Cesare was to get another test.

General Botha had decided on some diversion movement toward Barberton, or something of that sort. Certain phases of the operation were such that the Italians seemed best suited for the work, the principal consideration being mountain-climbing and quick action.

The bloodthirsty Cesare had been placed in the van, with the instruction that the outposts of the British were to be silenced, by force if necessary. Perhaps that stiletto would come in handy.

To escape that little bit of steel was the business of the man on guard. At any rate it was stiletto against bayonet, and a case of the quickest man win. The odds thus were in favor of the Tommy Atkins interested.

Late that night the commando left camp. Others bodies followed and it seemed that a very lively night was coming.

Here is what happened to Cesare:

That terrible exterior of his hid a heart as tender as that of any woman. But he was in for it. So when the British lines were reached and the sentries had been spotted against the skyline, developments were on his hands.

Absolute silence had been enjoined—on this depended the success of the expedition.

Cesare remembered this until he got to the sentry. Cautiously he had crept up to the man, using every bit of available cover. But his nerve seems to have given way when he saw the unsuspecting Tommy before him. Still, Cesare was game, and with the grace of a mountain-billy and the shriek of a demon he jumped on the back of his adversary, bringing him down with a thud.

It is no easy matter to be thus assailed in the dark, even if one has bayonet fixed. Tommy, as he explained himself afterward, said: "What the 'ell!" and went under.

Down the line other shuffles commenced to take place, and inadvertently, or by design, somebody fired a shot. Naturally the supports in the rear took notice, and rifles began to bark all over. Had it not been that Tommy Atkins just hates to fight in the dark, Cesare would have been in a tight fix. So, by the way, would have been the others.

But in the British army under such circumstances—the sense of gregariousness being strong—it is customary to belabor a drum when such things occur, before further action is taken. The supports of the outposts, therefore, retired to the rear, as per field-service regulations, leaving those in the hands of the Boers to their fate. There was consolation in the fact that next morning those taken would show up anyway, minus their rifles and boots, of course. But such things can be replaced.

All this time Cesare was hanging on to this "Inglese" like grim death. He did not want to hurt the man, but could not make him understand this. Fortunately, this particular Tommy had been captured before, and thought it best to come along.

In the interest of preserving the prestige of the British army it should be stated that Tommy had dropped his rifle and could not find it in the dark. The manly art of self-defense would not avail against a nice little stiletto, which Cesare had brandished before his eyes.

On the whole, though, Cesare was very lucky. That he used the weight of his body when tradition would have had him employ his stiletto shows that he was a kind soul and courageous heart.

"THE Bambalaise," as such he became known, hailed from southern France, had a Basque face, and delighted in the songs of the north of the Gaelic republic. There was one he would sing from early morning until late at night. It was the one that gave him his name:

> *"Mais, j'aime encore mieux ma Bambalaise*
> *Qui m'attend au pays Breton."*

On the "ma Bambalaise" Charles laid particular stress.

Bambalaise had stayed at all the big hotels in France, Italy, Belgium, Spain and for a time he had even honored Shepheard's at Cairo. He had been "*bien riche*" once upon a time, he averred often and emphatically. Something had gone wrong one day on the Paris *Bourse, et, voila!* here he was, a poor man. On the whole, though, given the proper opportunity, Charles could have made an excellent "gentleman of France" as one Wyman paints him.

Those who knew him better wondered at his technical knowledge of hotel-heeping, and his memory of the first names of all the *chefs de cuisine* and *gérants* in the hotels he had "stayed" at.

Bambalaise had been in these hostelries, but as bottle-washer, or something of that sort.

In addition to having been rich, Charles had been in love many times, and often, so it would seem, *de belles dames avec beaucoup d'argent et d'outre bien* had succumbed to his charms. But there was one little love affair he dwelled on nightly. At Boulogne-sur-Mer he had met a little chambermaid, by name of Hazeline, and she had broken his heart in ever so many pieces. *La petite Bambalaise* had refused to marry him, because of his superior station. Such lovely, brown eyes she had, and a deportment and figure—*ah, comme elle était belle! Pauvre Hazeline!*

Hazeline must have turned the little Gascon down. But he never forgot her. His identification-card carried the instruction that in case of his being killed, Hazeline was to be notified. Charles had gone to the war to be killed. What was life without the love of Hazeline, anyway! Cyrano de Bergerac never loved Roxane more ardently.

Arrived on the scene of action, Bambalaise crimped a reef in his suicidal intentions and decided to live just as long as he possibly could. He never answered any of the calls for volunteers that were made whenever a particularly hot piece of business was in hand.

Possibly Bambalaise had been a cook. He could do things with the tough beef and old angora mutton that no other president pro tem. of the mess could accomplish. This was a point in his favor. It stopped the gibes.

But Bambalaise's sphere of usefulness was to be further enlarged. In a Kaffir *kraal* near Mooifontein he commandeered a concertina in good order. He had wandered thither in search of pork and when he returned he had a dead piglet strung across the saddle and was measuring the step of his *cheval*—an old charger with sway back and compass knees—with some tune.

The camp rushed to meet him. Pork and music at the same time was really too much for one day.

Thereafter Bambalaise became the regimental band of his commando. He was always at the head of the column—on the march—and played rather well. In camp he gave concerts, and "La Bambalaise" sounded ever so much better with the concertina accompaniment.

What became of Bambalaise is unknown to the writer. The last time he was in evidence he was heard in the dusk of the fine evening that landed Viljoen's column in Nylstrom, very much the worse for a long ride and some fighting that had ended in the, by then, usual retreat.

FAME is of two kinds. There is one sort that finds its way into history; the other never gets further than the heart. Ultimately the former becomes dry reading, and when the historian revises and abbreviates the intimate story of the war, he drops most of what does not seem essential to him. But it is different with the kind of fame that owes its being to the memory of men.

And so the story of the Count, of Grabow, even that of Janos, that of "Dynamite" Dick, the sad chapter on Dolibois, the less mournful one on Fritz Scholz, the dramatic end of Yelle de Haas, the doings of Altendorf, of Cesare and "La Bambalaise" will for another generation or two be real and living fame. It is altogether unlikely that the men who bunked with them, ate with them, fought beside them, laughed at them and sympathized with them will ever be untrue to their memory. No printed pages will be needed to recall them.

But the late Boer war also had its famous soldiers of fortune, or at least its well-known ones.

One of them has already been mentioned. Colonel Villebois-Mareuil had been on the French General Staff for many years, had commanded units of the Foreign Legion in Algeria, and had a most enviable reputation when he came to the Transvaal—not for the purpose of material gain, but for the love of the thing and, as he explained it, for the sake of republican government. He was a little too small physically to cause much of an impression. However, as a soldier he had few equals on the veld. His end at Boshopf, April 5, 1900, was all too untimely and a great loss to the Boers.

The opinion held of him on both sides is best shown in the statement that the Transvaal government gave him a commission as General, and when his death became known to Lord Roberts, that officer ordered him shown full military honors. Lord Roberts even went so far as to transmit the sad news to the family himself. General Villebois-Mareuil's service would have been of much greater value had he been able to carry out the plans he proposed. Unfortunately, the resources of the two Boer republics would not permit this.

Although he had known a somewhat similar state of affairs in the French Foreign Legion, he was ever ready to comment upon the fact that his corps contained as many Germans as it did French. In his camp the "Wacht am Rhein" was heard as often as "La Marseillaise." That such a thing as a Franco-German *rapprochement* is not utterly impossible was shown by the men who went to their doom at Boshopf, telling the English that they knew no such thing as surrender. The episode is almost the end of the Old Guard at Waterloo all over again.

Next in order comes Colonel Blake. His services were sincerely appreciated by the Boers. General Louis Botha placed the greatest confidence in his military knowledge and judgment. Colonel Blake had been in the Transvaal for several years when the war started. He was a West Point graduate and had seen considerable service on the Western frontier with the Sixth United States Cavalry. His return to his native country after the war was shortly followed by his death in New York. During the Natal campaign he commanded the First Irish Brigade, but later relinquished command in favor of Major MacBride.

Colonel Maximoff headed a composite body of Russians, Germans, Hollanders, Austrians and Slavs from the Balkan peninsula. The best fighting of the corps was done in the Orange Free State, especially in the vicinity of Thaba'nchu. Maximoff had served in the Russian army, and had seen much service in Southwestern Asiatic Russia. His efforts were valued highly by the burghers.

Colonel Ricardo, commanding the Italian corps, was a sort of *beau ideal* soldier of fortune. As stated before, he had fought against the Abyssinians and with Aguinaldo. However, his military career came to an end when he married a niece of President Krüger.

Others who may be mentioned here are Commandant Krieger, a rebel from the Cape Colony, at one time in command of the German corps; Lieutenant Galopeau, with the French corps; Captain Ganjetzki, of the Russian army, in command of some Cossack scouts; Major Lynch, commanding the Second Irish Brigade and now a member of the British Parliament; Captain Hassel, in charge of the American scouts; Count de Breda, attached to the corps of Villebois-Mareuil, and Captain Johnsen, in command of the ill-fated Scandinavians.

Within the class of soldiers of fortune may also be counted Major Albrecht, commanding the artillery of the Orange Free State, and Commandant Schiel, both of them Germans.

The latter's career was brief, ending at Elandslaagte. To his efforts was due, in a measure, the fine organization and training of the Staats Artillerie of the Transvaal. Schiel at one time was a great favorite with the Zulus and Swazis, so much so in fact that he became known as Cetewayo Mabile—Cetewayo the Second.

To name all the foreign officers who came to the veld in search of experience and commissions would be too great a task.

There were dozens, however, whose exploits have been recounted around many a camp-fire, and whose names can never be forgotten on the Rand, in Natal, or wherever hearts quicken at the memory of those trying years. Still two more might be mentioned. Colonel von Braun held a commission in a Prussian Guard artillery regiment and assisted greatly in the planning of redoubts, intrenchments and the like at Ladysmith. He was captured by the British in one of the affairs along the Tugela and spent many a weary month on St. Helena.

There was also the notorious von Brüsewitz, who paid for the cold-blooded murder of a civilian at Heidelberg on the slopes of Spion Kop.

And, now, perhaps, a short estimate of the value of the soldier of fortune as a fighter will be in order. Properly handled one of them, considering the average of the whole, is the equal of any three men ordinarily put in the field.

He is invariably a good shot, and cool in action when not a mere novice at his dangerous game. There seems to be little of the sordid about him; in fact he usually is an idealist who would rather fight for nothing in a cause which he considers just than take the money of the other camp.

For these considerations he expects better treatment than is generally given the rank and file.

He has no great objection to strict discipline, but does not seem averse to getting even with the martinet. His high degree of initiative is the cause of this. His knowledge of military science is usually nil, excepting those cases in which commissions have been held in regular establishments.

All in all he is a gentleman not to be trifled with by friend or foe. Had the Boer governments been able to enlist in their cause every soldier of fortune ready to fight on the veld, the map of South Africa it seems reasonable to believe would look decidedly different today.

THE CAMP-FIRE

A MEETING-PLACE FOR READERS, WRITERS AND ADVENTURERS

A GOOD while ago I told you Gordon McCreagh had given me a turquoise and that some day I would tell you the story of his adventure in obtaining it. More properly I should have given you the tale along with Mr. McCreagh's "Kite Dickinson, Non-Combatant," in the August issue, for the incident was made part of that story, but I often make mistakes, and that was one of them. But he has a story in this issue and, anyway, here's his adventure:

> I had sneaked into Tibet under the guidance of a *Bhutia* lama. The Bhutias are an offshoot of the Tibetans, inhabiting the independent State of Bhutan on the southern side of the Himalayas. This fellow, Tajun Kama, was a most amusing cuss,

by the way. He had at some time gone to the mission school at Kurseong to investigate the teachings of the good Padre. All he got from there was a rosary, which he considered far superior to the Lamaistic prayer-beads, and he used this for hours at a stretch, repeating the Bhuddistic *Om mane padme hum* (Lord remember the jewel in the lotus), varying it with an occasional "Hail Mary," to the unutterable horror of Father Ferens, when he heard of it.

WELL, we were beyond the British outpost at Chumbi when this old reprobate came to me one day with a story that there was said to be a collection of turquoises hidden in a deserted monastery perched away up on the bleakest spot possible—no wonder it had to be deserted. The old fellow still had some qualms about the actual looting of a *lamaserai*, though he did not hesitate at bargaining for a share in return for the information.

I had to go up alone, accordingly, and after rummaging about for some time it struck me to dig the Buddha, which was the only thing left in the place, out of its foundations in the raised clay platform. The stones were hidden in the hollow of the image, a small bagful.

Then an old hermit creature, who hadn't ever cleaned himself at all, jumped on me from nowhere, and managed to give me the scar, which I carry on my chin, before I could get away, after which the vindictive old beast chased me for miles down the mountainside. It was in my kismet that he was old while I was young—he didn't catch up. Afterward it became evident that Tajun Kama had heard about this old berserk at the same time he got the information about the loot, which largely accounted for his disinclination to accompany me.

THERE were about three hundred dollars' worth of stones altogether, but later, misfortune overtook me and I had to sell all except a very few. They were all bored through the middle; evidently they had been strung 'round some image as a necklace at some time or other, or perhaps they were going to be.

I put the story up with Kite Dickinson as principal, because he had been up with the Tibet expedition in 1904.

THE statement at the August Camp-Fire of the ground covered by one of our members in his travels has brought in a number of letters from other members. Some of them have already entered for the proposed contest. Though the start was suggested for September 1st or October 1st, any date will serve to begin the year on.

These are the conditions: Only distinct trips count. More than three distinct trips on the same line will not be counted. Return trips count as distinct trips. All distances in statute, *not* nautical, miles. Give start and end, distance, and approximate dates of each trip. Note longest voyage without touching land. Distinguish between land and sea trips, and between sail and steam. Routine trips, like those of a traveling salesman, don't count. *And*—each man must mail to this office, or to himself in our care, post-cards or letters from enough places on his travels to establish the authenticity of his claims.

Here are two of the letters that have come in, one from California, the other from Kansas:

In the Camp-Fire you published quite a piece about one "Victor Hope"—that it took him 14 years to travel 211,900 statute miles in this time. Do you think this a record? Why, I don't. He should have traveled at least 350,000 miles in that length of time. I don't want to boast about what I have done already, but if he can come up to 52,000 miles in one year, I'll take my hat off to him. I've traveled in 5 years about 142,000 miles, of which there was about 10,000 miles by rail. I visited from 30 to 35 foreign countries, have been on every ocean and every continent except Asia. I did this on less than $100, and had $7.35 when I first left home in 1899.

NO DOUBT that Victor Hope has been in the same places that I have been, and if he ever goes to the same cities I have been in I can furnish him with a few names and addresses where I lived while staying at these different cities.

I went by the name of Frank Ryan, and if Victor Hope ever visits Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, he'll find my name (that is, Frank Ryan) at the sailors' home there. It is the fifth on the register. I was there on January 2, 1904, or four days before it was opened to sailors. I had room No. 6.

If you will look up the newspapers for August about the first part of 1903, in New York City, you will find that the S. S. *El Dorado*, of the Morgan line, on the return voyage from Galveston, Texas, to New York City, picked up a young Cuban boy about 11 or 12 years of age, about 200 miles off the coast of Georgia. Well, I was the interpreter for this boy. You will find the name of Frank Ryan signed articles on the S. S. *El Dorado*. Then I stayed about one week at a boarding-house on Cherry St., New York City.

AFTER roaming around the world for five years, I arrived at my home in Chicago, where my parents kept all of my letters and post-cards, which same I have in my possession. I am at present in the Los Angeles Fire Department, as fireman. I am now married and have a family. My wife I met in Bantry, Ireland.—G. F. HARASTA.

P. S.—I think you started something when you published that piece about V. H.—G. F. H.

I ALSO have covered a few miles. Would set it down in miles but have no chart now, so I'll just refer to my papers and give you the routes and places visited. I commenced as cabin-boy on August 4, 1891, in Danish schooner *Elise Bay*, from Nykobing F. to London, Trelleborg, St. Petersburg, Faaborg, Gothenburg, Methill, Wimo (both in Scotland) and Fredericksound, where I was discharged on December 17, '91.

Sch. *Elise*, February 18, '92, from Horsem to Gothenberg, Dysart, St. Brieux, St. Malo, Flensburg, Herosand, Triport and Havre. Was there transferred to brigantine *Afma*, of Fano, for Cadiz, Rio Grande do Sul, Macaon, Rio Grande, Cardiff, Rio Grande, Paranagua, Montevideo and Antwerp, where I was discharged June 27, '94.

THEN as A. B., in full rigged ship *Sutherlandshire* of Glasgow, 1548 tons reg., to San Francisco and back to Runcorn, England. Paid off June 10, '95. Then a period of two years in which I attended navigation school and served my time in the Danish navy in the gunboat *Falster*. Sept. 12, 1897, as A. B. in Danish bark *Serapis*, from Antwerp to Paranagua, Valparaiso, Iquique and Hamburg. From April 1, '99, A. B. in S. S. *Anglia*, from Hamburg to Hull, Naples, Constantinople, Tagenrok, Algero, and Copenhagen, June 14, '99.

As A. B. in 4-masted bark *Beechbank*, 2154 tons reg., June 22, '99, from Hamburg to San Rosalio (Gulf of California), Frisco to Liverpool. A very unlucky ship. Had 9 months' passage out to San Rosalio, and on passage home was partially dismasted off River Platte, when a tidal wave struck us. On passage out we saved 20 men from bark *Bianca*, of Liverpool, waterlogged, landed them in Port Stanley where we called for repairs, after being battered about off Cape Horn for 6 weeks. Paid off in Liverpool, Jan. 23, 1901.

LATER, 2d mate in barkentine *Correa*, of Ardendal (Norway), from Liverpool to Para, Laguma del Carmen and Le Havre, July 10, 1901. A rest at home in Horsent, Denmark, until March 24, 1902, when, as mate on sch. *Odom*, I visited London and Stockholm. Again A. B. in S. S. *Caledonia*, from Copenhagen to Riga, Bordeaux, St. Petersburg, and back to Copenhagen June 25, 1902, till Aug. 16th, same year.

As 2d officer in bark *Casma*, of Fano, I made my longest and most pleasant voyage, namely, from Elsinore to Antwerp, Port Natal (Durban), New Castle (N. S. W.), Guaijaguil, Tonga Islands, San Sebastian (Spain), St. Ybes and Gothenburg, where I left on August 9, 1904.

THEN 2d officer in S. S. *Helge*, from October 1, 1904, till February 15, 1905, calling at Sveaburg (Finland), St. Malo, Copenhagen, Emden, Stockholm, Libau and back to Copenhagen. Bos'n in S. S. *Eretria*, for a passage to S. Shirlds. Again A. B. in American bark *Homeward Bound*, making a record passage to 'Frisco in 118 days. (Say, Capt. Thompson was sure some crack-her-on, believe me!) August 19, 1905, discharged in 'Frisco.

August 29, 1905, shipped again in American bark *Alden Bessie* to Vancouver, B. C., Anacortes, Wash., Osaha and Kobe, Japan. Some exciting trip; cargo caught fire; one month in danger of explosion before reaching Japan. Ship condemned, crew sent back to Seattle via Yokohama as passengers in S. S. *Dakota*.

Then comes my last and almost longest voyage, in the full-rigged ship *Accidental*, 1409 tons. reg., March 3, 1906, leaving Port Townsend, to New York, 172 days; served as 2d and navigating-officer. Discharged August 28, 1906.

I THEN made what I now can see was a very foolish move—left the sea and came inland. Traveled by rail from New York to Clinton, Iowa, later through Iowa and Nebraska, to Colorado Springs. Came East again through Kansas, then South through Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma to Texas. Then this Summer north again through Oklahoma and am now stranded high and dry in this insignificant burg. Tried to do some harvesting, but having contracted tuberculosis, I am not stout enough to stand the hard labor, so now I'm up against it good and proper.—C 292.

OUR identification cards remain free to any reader. The two names and addresses and a stamped envelope bring you one.

The cards bear this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of ADVENTURE, New York, U. S. A., stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. The names and addresses will be treated as confidential by us. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for purposes of business identification. Later, arrangements may perhaps be made for money deposits to cover cable or telegraph notifications. Cards furnished free of charge, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application. Send no applications without the two names and two addresses in full.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later, for the cost of manufacture, we may furnish, instead of the above cards, a card or tag, proof against heat, water and general wear and tear, for adventurers when actually in the jungle, desert, etc.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give the two names and addresses in full when applying.*

THE AMERICAN LEGION

BY THE time this reaches your eye the American Legion may have been called into action by the outbreak of war. Nobody knows now. But we all know that this country is sadly unprepared for war, and that the only sane and patriotic thing to do is to make the most of what military resources we have, and to do it *while there is time.*

Here, briefly stated, is the purpose and use of the Legion:

The Legion believes in making instantly available to our country, in case of war, all men who already have military or technical training valuable in modern warfare by land or sea. Members of the Legion enroll themselves in advance for this purpose, to be used as the Government (not they themselves) may see fit, according to their qualification.

The Council of the Legion consists of Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft, Elihu Root, Jacob M. Dickinson, Henry L. Stimson, Luke E. Wright, George von L. Meyer, Truman H. Newberry and Charles J. Bonaparte—that is, all our ex-Presidents and all our ex-Secretaries of War or the Navy. That is sufficient endorsement.

IF YOU have anything to offer your country, this is the way and now is the time to do it. We of the Camp-Fire should be the first to enroll, for it was we who started the Legion. Thousands have joined. Hundreds of thousands are needed.

And remember that it isn't only military training and experience that are needed. Far from it! There is an equal need of men experienced in any one of seventy-odd trades, businesses or professions. Do you know what would be one of the very first hurry-calls sent out in case our country went to war—sent out instantly—perhaps even before war was actually declared? For motor-trucks, *motor-trucks*, MOTOR-TRUCKS! For everything of the kind that could carry or pull, from motor-cycles to the heaviest trucks in existence.

And for doctors, riggers, lithographers, engineers, blacksmiths, telegraphers, bakers, dentists, railroad men (lots of 'em!), radio operators, divers, "powder-men," mechanics and some sixty more.

For full information write at once to—The Secretary, The American Legion, 10 Bridge St., New York City. We keep the address standing in our "Information Directory."

A PLEA for information. Looks like a hard question for which to get a definite answer. Any of you able to throw on the light?

> Say, Mr. Hoffman, are you in a position to know—and I think you are, and probably some members of the Camp-Fire are, if you will kindly suggest it in your chat with the members around the embers, when the light burns dim and low—what becomes of all the cashiered army officers? And there are a plenty of them. In pictures they enlist under a foreign flag or in the Foreign Legion, and do a number of deeds of valor and bravery. In reality, what becomes of them? You see in the daily paper, or in an army order, where some officer has been cashiered, and that's the last you ever see or hear of it. Give me some dope on it if you can.—FRED L. HOLDEN, Highland Springs, Va.

AS YOU know, Captain George A. Schreiner, now at the front as a war correspondent, is a Boer, and earned his title in service during the Boer war with that famous corps, the Staats Artillery. You know, too, I think, that his father was a colonel of Chasseurs d'Afrique in Algeria, that he is an eminent authority on high explosives, and that he knows Mexico and our own Southwest, as well as our East, from personal experience.

Once, at my request, he sent me a little "talk" for his fellow members of the Camp-Fire and, as it bears upon his article in this issue, I give it here:

> To me the pleasures of good comradeship are the greatest thing in life. To be sure, we could give this one of the fine technical definitions some people delight in. But I think that "greatest thing in life" is explicit enough, because the sense is obvious.
>
> I DON'T think that I have ever met any but just "fellows." Some of them were a little turtle-like at first—likely to get into their shell—but in the end they melted. To effect this change, we must understand the other fellow. And to understand means, of course, to give and take a little. It means that we must be willing to sympathize with the little failings we discover. To do this is its own reward. You can't expect sympathy if you're not willing to hand over a little of it in return. Whether you are going to meet fellows in life or just members of the public, depends upon your willingness to beat the other fellow in being sympathetic.
>
> I think that I have met all sorts of people. At first we all look *all sorts*. After that we discover that the *all sorts* is merely a relative term. In the end you find that the thinking of the other chap is not as radically different from yours as you had imagined. His mental curves may be a little out of your way, and possibly there is a little kink in his way of looking at things. But since this is naturally the subject of your tolerance, or ought to be, you will be able to overlook it. In the end you will be able to do more than that—you will bend that kink into what it ought to be.
>
> I HAVE often cast about for a place in which this could be done better than in the camp. So far I have not found any. What's more, I don't expect to find any. In the camp you get back to first principles; elsewhere you try to get as far away from them as you dare without running the risk of being thought queer.
>
> The companionship of the Camp-Fire is one of the things that is hard to understand except you have experienced it. Sometimes it finds its expression in things ridiculously material. The consensus of opinion, for instance, will tacitly rule that the stew in the pot is to be fairly divided. I have seen that happen almost every day. Then again the fellow who has tobacco is expected to, and usually does willingly, share the last pipe as it were. The result of this spirit is that the chap who seeks advantages is not likely to belong to the charmed circle, whose members watch the embers and somehow become conscious of the fact that they are following the same thought.
>
> I HAVE now and then, too often in fact, returned to the camp-fire after a hard day on the kopjes, and found that a fellow was missing. Well, *something* had happened to him. What that something was you can surmise. He had joined the casualties. Sometimes he would come back and for a

spell he would be the center of the gentlest consideration man can get. But more often he would not come back. He had either been left under a little red hill out on the veldt, or else his anatomy had suffered so much that he could not come back. I have seen real tears wept on such occasions—not the sort that come easy, but the sort that you could no more suppress than you could Niagara Falls.

Some of the fellows introduced to you in another part of this issue you may have met elsewhere, not in person perhaps, but in type. They all did their best in what they considered a just cause. That this cause seemed less just to others, does not matter here. There is no rancor in anything that has been said.

ONE of the best friends I ever made was a Captain Freeman, who bossed it over a bunch of Australians until the day when I took his Goertz binoculars, against his express will and desire. He tried his best to get them back, but as they were better glasses than I had, I decided to keep them.

Since the captain could not get them back by force he tried persuasion—with amazing result. Those glasses had been given to him by "one who was near and dear to him." At first I suspected mother. No, that was not the person! A sweetheart, perhaps? No, not a sweetheart! His father, maybe? No, not his father! Then, who in the name of blazes could it be? Well, his kid sister! Geneva conventions and international military law are not worth much after that. So the captain got his glasses back.

I think that this shows directly and inversely that not all the good fellows are on one side of the issues that lead to war and "sich."—George A. Schreiner.

HAS it ever occurred to you that we of the Camp-Fire could turn ourselves into a huge Secret Service, covering the entire globe, and that, from the mere fact that at any given moment there are hundreds, thousands, of us in all kinds of strange places all over the map, we could, among us, pick up bits of information very valuable to a government entangled in a war?

Oh, no, I haven't any idea of starting a Secret Service. We of the Camp-Fire started and built up the American Legion and are entitled to rest on our laurels—for a while. To say nothing of the Adventurers' Club. But it's an interesting idea all the same.

AND some day there might be practical value in it. Suppose this country were at war. Isn't it probable that many of our wandering members, or even those of us at home, could pick up bits of information here and there that might be of very real value to the United States government if promptly transmitted?

Bear it in mind. You never can tell. And one little bit of information sent in might be of more value than all the sender could do on the firing-line.

PERHAPS the following bit out of a letter from one of us does not furnish new "dope." It is hard to believe that Japan could be violating the Monroe Doctrine and entrenching herself on this side of the Pacific for war, without our Government's agents being fully aware of it. Yet very similar reports on this same naval base have come to me from others of you. And, apparently, our Government is doing nothing in the matter.

You never can tell. If war does come to us, you wanderers remember that information is as valuable as fighting men.

> We passed the magnificent new coaling station and naval base the Japanese are building at Turtle Bay yesterday, and we saw the big ships of war in the roadstead and the tops and stacks of others farther in the bay. The workmen could be plainly seen through glasses. They will not let any one go near the place, but will drive them off with destroyers. A big cruiser, without any flag, overhauled us, but as she got up on us, she broke out the Union Jack. She evidently came from the Jap station. I, personally, am very sorry that the people of the United States are permitting this to go on, as I believe that the time is coming when we will rue it.

THE man who inserts the following notice is personally known to me. I can hardly be expected to vouch for any one I've met only once and known by correspondence for a year or two, but I'm free to say that I like him, and believe him a good man for the purpose he has in view. All who "hang out" in San Francisco please note:

> I wish to get in touch with all service men, ex-service men, and suitable civilians, who either live in, or make San Francisco their headquarters. My intention is to organize an Adventurers' Club. Please communicate with me through Mr. Hoffman. Each applicant will be investigated, as it is determined to have a first-class club, permanent and satisfactory, composed of gentlemen.—C 293.

THE Adventurers' Club, by the way, continues to flourish. As you know, the Chicago chapter has permanent quarters in the building of the Chicago Press Club, at 26 North Dearborn Street, and has started a permanent camp on a small lake within easy reach of the city. The New York Club, the parent chapter, is stronger than ever before and has its headquarters at Browne's Chop House, on Broadway, opposite the Metropolitan Opera House. It, too, is likely to have its own club rooms before long.

The Montreal and Los Angeles chapters perished because they were too adventurous. Nearly all the members wandered off into the world at large on one quest or another. But San Francisco now comes to the front, and charters have been granted for a chapter in the U. S. Marine Corps and in several of the Eastern cities. And there follows the account, sent me by A. D. H. Smith, secretary of the New York Chapter (you've read his stories), of the formation of the El Paso and the Nogales chapters.

THE Adventurers' Club is in its third or fourth year now. It couldn't have lived that long and grown in strength if it hadn't proved very well worth while. Those of you who are not members are missing something many of you could easily have. Three places that especially ought to have chapters are Manila, Honolulu and the Canal Zone. Also Hongkong and Alaska.

There are two ways to join: (1) Personally meet the members of an existing chapter and make written application to its secretary. (2) Organize a chapter (at least four men) in any town in the world not already having a chapter. Apply for a charter to the New York or the nearest chapter. Further data supplied from this office.

Now for the Nogales and El Paso chapters:

The El Paso Chapter was largely the conception of Timothy G. Turner, the Associated Press correspondent at that city—recently become a resident of New York. For some months past a number of the adventurers, gathered in the Texas border town, had been contemplating the formation of an organization they proposed to call the Brotherhood of the Burro. Turner pointed out the greater advantage of joining the Adventurers' Club as a self-governing constituent chapter, and his idea was adopted with instant approval. A dinner was held, and R. P. Dorman was elected secretary, inasmuch as he was the only member who could be relied upon to stay more or less permanently in El Paso. He is the sole officer of the chapter. The first thing the El Paso Chapter did after organizing was to depart, practically en masse, for Sonora, to fight the Yaqui Indians, who were just then starting their campaign against the American settlers that came precious close to bringing about American intervention.

AT LATEST advices, the chapter numbered between thirty or forty members—not bad, considering that a great deal of care was observed in electing men, and that this was within less than six weeks after organization was undertaken. Among the members are soldiers, filibusters, war correspondents, big-game hunters, prospectors, who vary prospecting with machine-gun service, etc. They include General "Ben" Viljoen, the Boer soldier, who captured Dr. Jamieson, fought in most of the principal battles and actions of the South African war, and was Madero's right-hand man in Mexico; Charles C. Young, who went to Bokhara and Khiva; Edward S. O'Reilly, who has fought all over the world; R. H. G. MacDonald, who has served in three armies—and is still serving; L. M. Shadboldt, war correspondent; and many others. These names are quoted as typical.

THE Nogales Chapter was largely the inspiration of Basil D. Woon, city editor of the Nogales *Herald*, and a member of the New York Chapter. I quote from a letter from Mr. Woon, bearing date June 16:

"The dinner went off in splendid shape. About twenty-five were present, representing five nationalities, including Colonel Serrano, who was the personal representative of Governor Maytorena of Sonora. You see, we had to have him as a guest anyway, because the dinner was held in Nogales, Sonora, in "La Cueva," or the Cave Club, a unique place of liquid refreshment tunneled into a mountain. It turned out, however, that the Colonel was as much an adventurer as any of us, he having traveled most all over the world, besides having led many times his troops in battle. He has a bullet-hole through his throat, but nevertheless is a capital talker.

"C. P. Clarke, who has been knocking about the world for twenty odd years or so, was elected president. J. R. Halstead, whose specialty used to be racing horses, but who now is manager of a lumber-yard here, was made vice-president; Alf. Pellegrin, treasurer, and myself secretary.

"Those were all the officers we elected. We figured that four was enough for a club with a membership of less than thirty. Two members besides were appointed by the board of governors to act with them as an entertainment committee.

"WE TOASTED the Club, the U. S. A., Mexico, Maytorena, adventurers who have passed beyond, pioneers who made the West, Arizona and Nogales, and others when anybody thought of them. Colonel Serrano gave his permission for the Mexican national anthem to be played—you know orchestras are not allowed to play that anthem in Mexico without special and written permit, which is hard to obtain. Also we listened to a tune that was played when Gustav Madero was killed, which is also taboo.

"Among the motions passed was one which made it obligatory on the club to assist any one of its members (who is worthy of such assistance) in trouble in any country."

A LETTER from L. James Rowland of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, suggests another mystery for us of the Camp-Fire to unravel—the Brotherhood of the Senussi. The accounts of this Mohammedan secret order are very conflicting. Some say it amounts to little; some that it is the most powerful force in all Islam.

From an encyclopedia I get:

> SENUSSI, Mohammed Ibn Ali es-Senussi. A North-African Moslem, who, under the influence of Wahabism, founded at Mecca in 1837 a brotherhood for the purification and propagation of Islam. The founder died in 1859, and his son established a Church-State at Jerabub, in the Sahara, between Egypt and Tripoli. He gave himself out as the Mahdi, and undertook by the collection of arms, to prepare for a *jihad* or holy war.
>
> The Brotherhood of es-Senussi is a puritanic order of the dervish type, secret in its organization. It has some 120 centers in North Africa and Arabia, including a strong one at Mecca, where many pilgrims from all parts of the world are initiated. The Senussi movement has resulted in the rapid spread of Mohammedanism among the Sudanese tribes, and has not failed to take on a political aspect.

The Standard Dictionary says it was founded in 1842, that its founder was an Algerian, and that it is an influential Mohammedan religious brotherhood distinguished for its austerity and fanaticism.

GEORGE E. HOLT, who was with the United States consular service in Morocco for a number of years and gathered an unusual lot of inside information concerning that country and its peoples, once told me some very interesting things concerning the Senussi or Senussiyeh. He knows of his own knowledge that they levy regular taxes in at least Morocco, and he says their secret headquarters is the oasis of Jof, which, as I remember, is somewhere along the western edges of the Libyan Desert, south of Tripoli.

I understand that no white man has set foot in Jof, but Mr. Holt had it by reliable report that a small standing army is maintained there and that great wealth, in money, stores and ammunition, is being stored against "the day."

There are rumors of factories for the manufacture of arms, ammunition and other war supplies, with men technically trained in Europe. Rumors, too, of a spy system that covers most of the world, and centers at Jof.

MR. HOLT told me, also, that when we read of a Holy War proclaimed by the Sultan of Turkey or the Sheik ul Islam we are reading nonsense, for only the head of the Senussi can start a Holy War. When one *is* proclaimed every Mohammedan, no matter where he is—Africa, Asia, Europe, New York, Chicago—will at once become *juramentado*. That is, he will start right in killing whatever Christians are handiest, until he himself is killed.

WHAT is the whole truth? What part has this secret order played in the present war? What part may it play later? What is its ultimate object? Does it aim at the destruction of the Christian world? What, if any, authority does it exercise over the Sultan of Turkey and the Sheik ul Islam? How extensive and how powerful is it? How great a store of wealth has it laid away?

What does it all mean? Is it a serious menace hanging over us, an almost unimaginable horror yet to come? Are the Senussi waiting until Europe is weakened and crippled by the present war?

Among you there are some who can throw light upon the above. Let's hear from you. It may be that the matter is more important than the Christian world realizes.

INFORMATION DIRECTORY

IMPORTANT: Only items like those below can be printed—standing sources of information. No room on this page to ask or answer specific questions. Recommend no source of information you are not *sure* of. False information may cause serious loss, even loss of life. *Adventure* does its best to make this directory reliable, but assumes no responsibility therefor.

For data on the Amazon country write Algot Lange, care U. S. Consul, Para, Brazil. Replies only if stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed and only at Mr. Lange's discretion, this service being purely voluntary. (Five cents postage in this case.)

For the Banks fisheries, Frederick William Wallace, editor *Canadian Fisherman*, 35 St. Alexander St., Montreal. Same conditions as above.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii and Alaska, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Ag., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal North West Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

For Adventurers' Club, get data from this magazine.

For The American Legion, The Secretary, The American Legion, 10 Bridge St., New York.

Mail Address and Forwarding.—This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

For cabin-boat and small boat travel on the Mississippi and its tributaries, "The Cabin-Boat Primer," by Raymond S. Spears; A. R. Harding, Publisher, Columbus, O. 60 cents.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

WANTED MEN

NOTE.—We offer this corner of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to our readers. Naturally we can not vouch for any of the letters, the writers thereof, or any of the claims set forth therein, beyond the fact that we receive and publish these letters in good faith. We reserve the privilege of not publishing any letters or parts of a letter. Any inquiry for men sent to this magazine will be considered as intended for publication, at our discretion, in this department, with all names and addresses given therein printed in full, unless such inquiry contains contrary instructions. In the latter case we reserve the right to substitute for real names any numbers or other names. We are ready to forward mail through this office, but assume no responsibility therefor. N.B.—**Items asking for money rather than men will not be published.**

YOUNG man about 20, as companion on roughing trip, anywhere, any place, merely to see the country and knock about.—Address **JACK MCGOVERN**, 1358 Boone Ave., Bronx, New York City.

THREE athletic, physically fit young men to accompany me this Winter on prospecting trip leaving Chicago for the wilds of Colombia, S. A. Must not be over 5 ft. 7 in., able to stand adverse conditions and stick at least 12 months. Knowledge of Spanish preferred. Promise of adventure assured. Dangers of malaria, scarcity of food and water, wild life, tropical heat and rain incidental to our quest. No financial reward promised, but the chances are good if we stand the gaff and pull together. Must furnish your expenses and outfit, and we share alike in the proceeds. Men of questionable habits need not apply. Address first letter confidentially, giving information concerning yourself, what you've done and where you've been. Recent photo also essential, which I'll hold for reference.—Address **FREDERIC JOHNSEN**, Forest Park, Ill.

Inquiries for opportunities instead of men are NOT printed in this department.

YOUNG man to make a trip down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers in a house-boat. Starting in September from Portsmouth or Cincinnati, Ohio. Very little capital required. Good time assured.—Address W. No. 285.

PARTNER to travel with me. We will hunt and camp out. Expect to go with wagon and peddle goods to help pay expense of trip. I am 41 years old and have had experience in this sort of life. Partner must be steady and congenial.—Address **CHARLES CASEY**, care of Sadler Co., 183 Mission St., San Francisco.

PARTNER to join me in developing old Spanish mine. Experienced miner preferred. Am responsible.—Address Box 66, Fredericksburg, Gillespie Co., Texas.

FOUR or five men, 21 to 25, to form expedition to certain South American country for the purpose of working some very rich placer grounds, of which I have definite and authentic knowledge. Enterprise legal and will pay well, but is no pleasure trip. Men selected will have to work hard. Country where deposits are located is practically unexplored. I have assurances from Government of country of liberal concession. Am prepared to furnish the best of personal and business references; shall expect all applicants to do likewise. Applicants must be able-bodied and temperate; must know life in open, and firearms. Prefer men who know something of surveying, placer-mining, medicine and cooking. Applicants must give in first letter, name, age, nationality, physical characteristics, qualifications, references, and, if possible, a recent photograph.—Address W 296.

I AM going back to placer gold-mining and take up Government land in the Salmon Mountain region of Northwest California. Want working partners. Send addressed envelope.—Address A. H. **LOVEJOY**, 637 S. 3rd St., Highlandtown, Md.

CAN some adventurer tip us off as to where to go for adventure and profit? Own, with two others, a staunch sailboat 48 x 9 ft. We know something about fishing, lobstering, prospecting, collecting, etc. Want to go down along coast of Lower California or into the Gulf of California. Will return postage and acknowledge all letters.—Address **JACK BELMONT**, Gen. Del., San Diego, Cal.

Inquiries for opportunities instead of men are NOT printed in this department.

PARTNER to join me on a hike to go West. May go farther than the Coast. Spend Winter in Idaho Mountains. Plan to work way by selling goods. Prefer some one about 25 years who can stand hardships and stick through thick and thin. No booze-head wanted.—Address G. W. **CAIN**, Hotel Watkins, Louisville, Ky.

PARTNER between 25 and 35 for adventure and profit trip. Desirous of reaching highest point possible. Working our way. Am 28 years, 5 ft. 6 in., 125 pounds.—Address **LOUIS FREDERICK**, 244 E. 3rd St., New York City.

PARTNER to go with me on prospecting trip to Alaska next Spring. Must be ready to stand his share of expenses. I am 25; experienced quartz miner, prospector and mechanic. At present hold 4 gold, 1 copper and 3 iron claims in a distant country. Prefer gold prospecting, but am ready for any kind. Partner must have dark complexion.—Address **SAMUEL COLEN**, Gen. Del., Seattle, Wash.

PARTNER, 18 to 20, to work way through United States and South America. Must be willing to work and have good habits.—Address S. S. **SIVERTSON**, Elberta, Mich.

THREE partners for trip by canoe down the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. If partners prove satisfactory I have another proposition to make. Give full description and experiences. Also enclose photograph which will be returned.—Address **JOHN MCBRIDE**, P. O. Box 61, San Francisco, Calif.

PARTNER to any part of U. S. or Globe for adventures. Am 19 yrs., fair shot with any firearm. Good at trapping.—Address **FRED GIERSCH**, 1908 Division St., Davenport, Iowa.

YOUNG man for partner. Am 21, 6 ft. tall, light hair, aquiline features. Will go anywhere for adventure. No connections.—Address A. R. **HIGDON**, 227 N. Davidson St., Indianapolis, Ind.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE.—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

KELLEY, DEWEY SAM, last heard from at French Gulch, Mont.—Address **HOWARD PETERSON**, care *Adventure*.

BELL, WILLIAM SUMNER, last seen in Lovelock, Nevada, April 15, 1915. 29 yrs., 5 ft. 8 in., 150 lbs., broad shouldered, black hair, hazel eyes, light complexion, clean shaven, scar under chin.—Address **MRS. W. S. BELL**, 457 Lake St., Reno, Nevada.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

HAMILTON, THOMAS K., left Braintree, Mass., thirty years ago. Only a few of us left. Would like to get in touch with you.—Address **ARTHUR HAMILTON**, Chief Enginere Perrin Bldg., New Orleans, La.

HOOVER, FERRIS E., of Downers Grove, Ill., with the Asphaltum & Rubber Co., of Chicago, 1907, please write.—Don I. Bailey, 525 Kenilworth Court, Clinton, Iowa.

ROBERTSON, WYNDHAM. Last heard from with Southern Athletic Club, New Orleans.—Address Mrs. Annie Robertson, 722 Spruce St., Philadelphia. Pa,

JUNO, A. E. Last seen in El Paso, Texas, 1906. Also with me in oil fields, Beaumont, Texas.—Address M. A. Frazier, Fleming Bl'k, Phoenix, Ariz.

CAMPBELL, JOSEPH N., father. Left Danville or Dardanelle, Ark., 1860-61. Last heard from New Orleans, leaving for California.—Address Mrs. Mollie E. Shoup, 631 West 5th St., Oklahoma City, Okla.

ANY soldier, member of the National Military Home, Dayton, O., 1909 to June 20, 1912.—Address A. Amadeus A., care *Adventure*.

COURISH, Andrew, in Dona Ana, New Mexico, 1898. —Address Jack Carroll, St. John's, Newfoundland.

GRACE, MIKE, somewhere in Rocky Mts., 1900.—Address Jack Carroll, St. John's, Newfoundland.

WHELAN, FRANK, California, 1913.—Address Jack Carroll, St. John's, Newfoundland.

JENNINGS, BEN. Write to one of your best Goldfield, 1907-8, friends.—Box 212, Bridgeport, Nebr.

ALLEN, MARTIN DANON. Please write to Beaumont & Tenney, Attorneys, 143 Escolta, Manila, P. I., giving present address, as your mother's sister Luella desires this information.

HOLGATE, CLEM (SUNNY), last heard from in Providence, R. I., July 1914. Ex-prize-fighter, under names of Ed Leonard and Young Leonard. 5 ft. 8 in., 145 lbs., dark complexion, scar in corner of each eye.—Address Tom, L. T. 286.

PETTINGER, EUGENE, father, left Port Chester, N. Y., Jan. 1896. Last heard of New York City, driving taxicab 1905. 48 yrs., short and stocky, dark brown hair and eyes.—Address George E. Pettinger, Fort Kamehameha, Honolulu, H. T.

BLACK, LESLIE, last heard of in Huntly, Mont., about eight years ago, working on railroad ditch there. Light complexion, heavy set.—Address Grace Black, Gen. Del., Los Angeles, Cal.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

JENKINS, THOMAS CLAYTON, plumber, from Aberystwyth, Wales. 32 yrs., 5 ft. 7 in., fair, stout build. Left Liverpool, England, 1904. To San Francisco from Winnipeg after earthquake.—Address R. J. Thomas, 848 Lipton St., Winnipeg, Can.

KELLAR, WILLIAM S., from Tampa, Fla. Your wife is in a pitiful condition since you left the city last January, 1915. Write and let us hear from you.—Address Mrs. W. B. Johnson, R. F. D. No. 2, Box 274, Tampa, Fla.

FULLER, S. J., uncle. Please send me your address.—R. L. Young, 4 S. Harrill St., Charlotte, N. C.

JUAN. Tres partes del Rosario, Hotel Metropole, Detroit, Sept. 8, 1915, las otras dos partes. Acordarse No. 248. —Address L. T. No. 287.

MONROE, JOE, R. Enlisted in U. S. N. 1906. Went to Georgia.—Address L. T. No. 284.

PORTWOOD, ALF., blacksmith. About 1898-99 boarded with William Wenger, Lovell Road, Leeds, England. Have important news for him. Canadian papers please copy.—Address Joseph Tattersdill, 61 West 37th St., New York City.

IRVING, JAMES D., Private in Co. A, 18th Inf., soldiering at Ft. Clark, Texas, 1899.—Address Reuben M. Wright, 229 Pacific Ave., Jersey City, N. J.

MARKLE. If there are any Markles in Virginia or any one who knows of them.—Address Richard B. Markle, Box 21, Haines, Ore.

BRACKNEY. Want to hear from any reader by that name for purpose of finding out how many there are in U. S. and Canada and to establish family connections.—Address Emmert M. Brackney, R. R. No. 1, Greencastle, Ind.

WOULD like to hear from old chums who were with me in South Africa and Portuguese East Africa, 1899-1902. Jim Foster, Milwaukee, St. Paul; Moore Lafon, Louisville; Mylett, Manchester, N. H.; McLain, Butte, Pay Sergt. John Benham; all of 4 R. P. R's Transvaal. Red Maguire and McHenry, San Francisco, Cape Town; Ed Norton, New Orleans, Cape Town and Durban; Wild Bill Shea, Texas; Red O'Brien, Los Angeles; Daly Providence, Beira, P. E. Africa; Whitey Sullivan, Boston, Philippines and Orange Free State.—Address Ex-Cpl. Frank Lynch, 4 R. P. R., 66 W. Van Buren St., Chicago.

DARST, RED, "Memphis Red," "Redshear," last heard of Morgantown, W. Va. Worked river steamer with him between Louisville and Memphis last year. 5 ft. 8 in., 160 lbs., blond, 19 yrs.—Address Joseph E. Robins, Virginia St., Charleston, W. Va.

ADAMS, WILL HOLDEN, brother. Last heard from Vicksburg, Miss. 5 yrs. ago. Some ability as short-story writer, expert stenographer, salesman. 38 yrs., 5 ft. 5 in., 165 lbs., brown hair, blue eyes. $15.00 reward will be paid for his address or conclusive proof of death.—Address George C. Adams, 3515 West 18th St., Chicago.

O. K. RED (alias Canadian Red). Write your old pal K. K. K. Jack. I'm restless and the war looks good to me. You always stuck. Will you do it again?—Address Jack DeVoy, Box 850, Richmond, Calif.

REYNOLDS, WILLIAM P. Age 28 years. Light chestnut hair. Blue eyes. Nose slightly turned up. 145 lbs. 5 ft. 4 in. Last heard of 1908, Chic. Ill.—Address Mrs. Sarah Reynolds, 916 N. 46th St., West Phila., Pa.

BLECKIER, THOMAS, brother, last heard from Red Mills, Humbolt Co., Cal. 61 yrs., fair, blue eyes, born P. E. I.—Address Priscilla Shallon, 252 8th St., South Boston, Mass.

Inquiries will be printed three times. In the January and July issues all unfound back names will be printed again.

WETTER, PIERCE AND TELFAIR, last heard of in Chicago. Your sister needs you. Write.—Address Alberta Wetter, Box 137, Jesup, Georgia.

MORGAN, EARL, left Boston, March 1914. 20 yrs. Write. Important news.—Address Axel Johnson Seattle, Wash.

WILLIAMS, JACK, Tientsin, China. Write. May go back to Pekin. Your pard Kelly.—Address L. T. No. 288.

CRAVENS, JAMES S., brother, last heard from Sta. A, Springfield, Mo., in early 90's.—Address Mrs. Effie May Cravens Keyes, 605 Bolin St., Springfield, O.

CRAVENS, REECIE B. and TOLLIE T., nephews. Sons of John Cravens. Last address, Price's Branch, Mo. Write.—Address Mrs. Effie May Cravens Keyes, 605 Bolin St., Springfield, O.

SHUMAKER, ROBERT F. who was in Central America 1909-10 with G. R. H., at Mayan ceremony. Address L. T. 290.

MORISSEY, WARREN (or Morrissey). Last heard of as an engineman in the Northwest, either Oregon or Washington.—Address G. A. Morissey, 222 California Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif.

H. G. G. Write your brother or come home. Received your letter of June 6th from Mobile, Ala.—Address J. W. G., Box 135, Enterprise Ala.

ALVA, STOCKWELL. Palled with him on North Oaks Farm at Gladstone, Minn. Last heard of Grand Rapids, Mich.—Address Frank Wagner, care of Hartford Lunch, 2232 Broadway, N. Y.

MUDD, CLARENCE. Saw him St. Louis, Mo., 1913. Later went to Arkansas. Important, old pal.—Address L. T. 291.

WOLF, DON W. Age 43. About 145 lbs. Fair complexion. Blue eyes. Last seen St. Louis, Mo., on or about July 30, 1914. Address H. M. Wolf, care of Bank Hotel, Aurora, Mo.

BOWHAN, W. H. Ex-sergeant Troop "H" 5th Cav. With me in Mex. Also in Colo. Nat. Guard 1913-14. Residence, Savannah, Ga.—Address H. M. Wolf, care of Bank Hotel, Aurora, Mo.

HOEKER, LOUIS. Left Chic. Jan. 30, 1892. Any mail from you will be strictly confidential. Please write your son.—Address Paul Hoeker, 816 N. Waller Ave., Chic. Ill.

REARDON, JOHN PATRICK, brother. Age 25. Born Franklin, Pa. Last heard of Alger, Ohio, Spring 1911.—Address Mrs. J. F. Gavin, 3714 Spence St., Dallas, Texas.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

KERNOHAN, FRANK. Last heard of in Greenwood about 17 years ago. Brown hair and eyes. Large scar over right eye.—Address Mrs. H. E. Dow, Fort Fairfield, Me.

TOMBS, ALBERT, and McKinley, Harry. Served in 2nd U. S. Inf. at Fort Assinniboine, Mont., 1908. Please communicate with old pal.—Address C. E. Cushing, Gen. Del., Portland, Ore.

HUGHES, ALBERT EDWARD. Your brother and sisters are anxious to hear from you. We were separated 1882, when our old home in Liverpool, England, was broken up. You were very young, and as a reminder of old times I quote your words when asked your name: "Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, born the day Tam o'Shanter won the Chester cup."—Address L. T. No. 289.

FRANK, E. S. Received your letter. Please send your address.—WHIT.

Inquiries will be printed three times. In the January and July issues all unfound back names will be printed again.

BARBER, WALLIE; Kern, Max; Knight, Chas L.; who were in the 18th Battery F. A. in Cuba 1907-8.—Address L. T. 295.

A READER of *Adventure*, a friend of mine, wants to borrow money from me. I want to know the amount he needs.—Address J. W. G.

MILLER, R. H. Last heard of Toro Point, C. Z., 1913, connected with hospital service.—Address A. R. WEBSTER, Ellright Apts., Cor. Bethune and Brush Sts., Detroit, Mich.

THE following have been inquired for in full in the September or October issue of *Adventure*. They can get the name of inquirer from this magazine:

ALDRIDGE, HARRY C.; Behrend, Otto, F.; Belt, Dr. H. P.; Black, Lamar, Bremerton, Wash.; Brink, Clifford; Brown, Portland to Weed, 1912; Buckner (Blume), Henry Ansil; Byrd, L. B., Mexico, 1908-9; Colburn, Johnny; Costelloe, Jack; Gazzale, Andrew Mellers; Graves, "Jim," G Battery, 3rd U. S. Heavy Artillery; Hamm, Robert E., Hallettsville, Tex., 1899; Hill, John Warren; Ingersoll, Harry G.; Irwin, E. T.; Johnson, A. E., Redstone, Mont.; Johnson, Charles H.; Kaplan, Paul; Kretz, Willie, Beaumont, Tex., 1910; Lewers, Nate; Long, Harry; McAuliffe, George; McKinley, Harry, 2nd U. S. Inf., Ft. Assiniboine, Mont., 1908; Margolin, Louis, Kansas City, Mo., 1910; Maxwell, William; Miller, Jacob; Miller, R. H., Toro Pt., C. Z., 1913; Milligan, Archie; Mullen, H. E. (Mac), Peoria, Ill.; Parker, O. B., formerly of Mexico; Perry, Mark M., formerly in Co. B, 1st Inf., Philippines, 1900-3; Perry, Thomas Balantyne (or Balantine); Phillips, J. R. ("Red," "Jasper" or "Perique"); Piper, E. E., Gearhart, Ore., 1914; Polter, Caloin B.; Redpath, Adam; Remes, Alexander or "Allie"; Rogers, Henery, Memphis, Tenn., March 11, 1915; Scates, James A., Engineer Corps 1901-4; Scully, John J., bricklayer; Shepard, W. C.; Strong, S. O., Bisbee, Ariz., 1907; Theisen, Peter Frank; Tombs, Albert, 2nd U. S. Inf., Ft. Assiniboine, Mont., 1908; Walters, George (Greasy); Whalley, Thomas, Brabants Horse, Boer War; Williams, C. E., Colon, Panama; Zeh, William Anton.

MISCELLANEOUS: Any member of Troop A, 1st U. S. Cavalry, 1887-92; Brandt, Sergt.-Major, Clark, Captain, Ross, 2nd Lieut. (Shorty) of Racine, 1911-12; anyone who served in Troop L, 4th U. S. Cavalry, in Philippines, July 1899-1901; also Greer, James; Bunch, Wm.; Witmer, Ed. A.; Higgins, Chester C., of the same troop; Studabaker, Davy; "Bonnie" Bowen; Van Ochs and "Venus" Philips.

NUMBERS 56, 68, 73, 76, W 93, W 107, W 140, W 150, W 153, W 183, W 184, W 189, W 195, W 203, W 211, W 212, W 215, W 231, W 250, C 189, C 205, L. T. 207. Please send us your present addresses. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care *Adventure.*

MANUSCRIPTS sent us by the following are being held by us, having been returned to us as unclaimed at the addresses furnished:

W. Lynch, Trenton, N. J.; Henry W. Edwards, New York; W. G. Gormley, Ontario, Canada; George Stillons, Chicago, Ill.; Francis Manston, Chicago, Cal.; James Perry, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Edward Weston, Rochester, N. Y.; R. Spanjardt, Montreal, Que., Can.

RANDOLPH H. ATKIN; S. N. Morgan, please send us your present addresses. Mail sent to you at addresses given us doesn't reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care *Adventure.*

IMPORTANT NOTICE: As announced before, every item will be published three times, then taken out. But in the *January* and *July* numbers of each year we will publish the names of all who have been inquired for and remain unfound.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

In addition to those stories mentioned in our ad on page 3, the following are at present scheduled for the December issue of *Adventure*, out November 3rd.

THE WHITE THING TO DO

J. Allan Dunn

Our old friend Sandy Bourke, cowboy errant, is with us again. Also his pie-eating pony. And between them they kick up some dust.

THAT MALASKOOTNA GLACIER EPISODE

E. Kirby Keener

Here is a tale of the far northwest, told by Mukluk Brown. It has the swing and the strength of the big outdoors, with a plot that strong men will like.

THE HAWK AND THE WHITE ELEPHANT

Ross Ellis

The writer is becoming famous for his clever stories of the business world. In this you meet the "Hawk," and a young man who fought him to a finish in the steel market.

THE ABDUCTION OF SWAIN

M. S. Wightman

If you like to laugh, here's your chance. Back country delegates hold the whip hand at a southern political convention; and they use it.

THE BATTLE OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

Raymond S. Harris

A thrilling night battle in the air over London.

THE LAST REEL

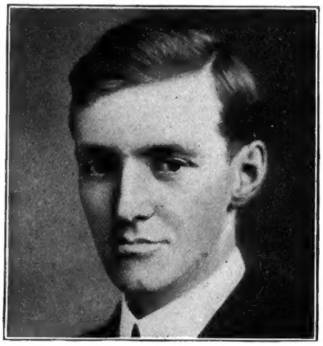
George Vaux Bacon

Strange adventures befall men who take movies in the heart of unexplored Brazilian jungles.

THE REAL THING

George L. Knapp

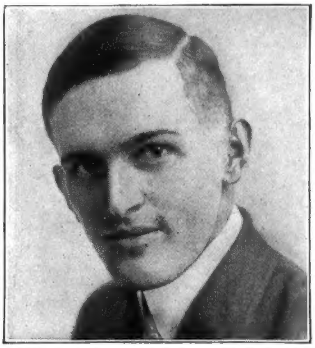
A tale of prospecting in the West, and of a man with a heart of flint.



FRED'K D. WEBSTER

Everybody's Special Representative

Mr. Webster is a Philadelphian—a business man of high standing. But his spare time was unproductive, the hours after regular business, evenings, holidays, etc. He turned to magazine work, and acting as the local subscription representative for his vicinity Mr. Webster adds $100.00 to $125.00 monthly to his regular earnings. He has established himself permanently in this work, enjoying an *extra income* of $1,200.00 to $1,500.00 annually.



WILLIAM M. FOUTS

Everybody's Special Representative

Ambition above the ordinary, with an earnest desire for education and self-betterment led Mr. Fouts to undertake magazine subscription work to provide the necessary funds for a college education.

"I have found my work for your publications most profitable and agreeable. I know of no other work that can be done in spare time which is so accumulative in its results and which provides so well for one's college expenses. I value not alone the financial end of the subscription business, but also the cultural and personal advantages which it affords, the opportunities of meeting people and studying them from all angles. This is an education in itself, especially beneficial to me, as I am studying for the ministry."

Everybody's
MAGAZINE

In every city, town and village EVERYBODY'S wants representatives. Ambitious people of the Webster-Fouts type who will forward to us the new and renewal orders of their vicinity.

The work may be done in spare time, an occasional hour now and then, thus opening a splendid opportunity for a number of our readers to add materially to their present income. Perhaps it opens an opportunity for you.

You will be paid a substantial commission on each subscription, and in addition a generous monthly salary—$5.00, $25.00, $100.00 or more, according to the number of orders you secure.

The opportunity is yours—to-day. We offer you the appointment as EVERYBODY'S neighborhood representative. No expense is attached to our offer, and previous experience is not necessary.

In making application, kindly give two or more references.

THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

Publishers *Everybody's Magazine* and *Adventure*

SPRING & MACDOUGAL STREETS :-: :-: :-: :-: NEW YORK, N. Y.

What Kind of a Peace Advocate are You?

Strange as it may seem, all Peace advocates do not "advocate" alike.

Indeed not. Some believe in one kind of Peace. Others in another kind. And so on. Sometimes they almost quarrel about their different Peace views.

In a brilliant article in the October EVERYBODY'S William Hard will present the various and numerous kinds of Peace advocated by numerous and various kinds of advocates.

He will show you why Jane Addams believes in *her* kind of Peace and William Jennings Bryan in *his* kind, and why John Hays Hammond agrees with neither of them and believes in a perfectly good brand of his own.

Whether you believe in Peace or War, don't miss this article in

Everybody's
MAGAZINE
FOR OCTOBER